

TRAINING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SPECIAL FORCES  
WARRIOR: DOES CHARACTER MATTER WHEN  
TRAINING THE ADAPTIVE LEADER?

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## ABSTRACT

Training the Twenty-first Century Special Forces Warrior: Does Character Matter When Training the Adaptive Leader? MAJ Jonathan A. Blake, 100 pages.

This thesis focuses on the impact of character in Special Forces (SF), or its lack thereof, through the historical analysis of various warrior sects and key historical figures. This research then contrasts current perceptions of character within SF soldiers with the historical examples of character. The objective of the research is to determine whether there is an issue with character within SF, and whether this aspect of the human warrior system should be trained in the Special Forces Qualification Course. Traditionally, the Army has focused its efforts on identifying and selecting individuals for units based on physical, mental, and character attributes that are demonstrated over a designated period. However, this approach misses the mark because it only predicts potential character and performance within an individual. SF soldiers today are being placed into situations that are morally ambiguous and their decisions will have both operational and strategic impact. The problem is that often, they neither hold, nor have they necessarily been adequately trained in the Army's and SF's organizational values. These values are the bedrock upon which a soldier's moral foundation is built, and it is this foundation that enables the Army's soldiers and leaders to judge and discern.

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## ACRONYMS

POI	Program of Instruction
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SF	Special Forces
SFAS	Special Forces Assessment and Selection
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	Special Operations Forces
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
UW	Unconventional Warfare

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ACRONYMS .....	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Primary and Secondary Research Questions .....	2
Delimitation .....	3
Background .....	3
Importance .....	12
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	14
CHAPTER 3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY .....	21
CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS .....	33
The Greek Hoplite .....	34
Pax Romana .....	35
The Viking Way .....	37
Chivalry .....	38
Robert Rogers .....	39
Francis Marion, aka “The Swamp Fox” .....	43
John Singleton Mosby .....	46
William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan .....	51
Special Operations Executive: A Model to be Followed .....	58
The Office of Strategic Services .....	59
Aaron Bank: The Father of Special Forces .....	62
The Cultural Foundation of US Soldiers .....	65
Current Reflections on the Status of SF .....	68
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION .....	72
Recommendations .....	76

APPENDIX A. CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF RECENT SFQC GRADUATES ....	78
ADMINISTRATIVE .....	79
REFERENCE LIST .....	85
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	91
CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT .....	92



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes to examine the training methodologies, past and present, that have been used to develop special forces (SF) soldiers, in order to identify common character attributes that were key to their tactical, operational, and strategic success. This research will also examine whether the current Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) is training those common qualities of character which are believed to be critical for the initial SF candidate on today's battlefield, as well as tomorrow's.

To date there have been several articles written on different aspects of training SF soldiers over the years, but there has not been a comprehensive study that hones the focus down to the essential elements of training that produce the desired character attributes required in this particular kind of soldier. The end state has changed over the years in response to the needs of the Army and the current battlefield, but there have been some unifying trends that have characterized these highly successful soldiers. This research proposes to determine those common attributes of character that have made the difference in the individual SF soldier over the years, and how those attributes can be best developed and trained.

The problem centers on whether future SF soldiers are being properly prepared to dominate the threats on today's battlefield as well as tomorrow's. There is a great deal of discussion and rhetoric about producing "adaptive leaders," "asymmetric warriors," warriors who can "cognitively assess" and "critically think." Many people are saying that the focus should remain on "how" to think and not "what to think." The reason presumably is that this ability to be adaptive will better enable future SF warriors to

leverage the situation at hand in order to accomplish the mission. However, in order to assess one must judge. In order to judge, one must have a position from which to judge from or compare to. That foundational position is built upon the bedrock of the organizational values that comprise the institutional character which are expected to embrace and learn. The problem arises when the individual soldier assesses a situation from a different set of foundational values than what is subscribed to by the Army and SF embraces. When this occurs, the context and frame of reference from which a soldier adapts, assesses, or cognitively analyzes is inconsistent at best and nonexistent at worst. The irony is that it is known that the military and SF in particular, wants this type of adaptive leader, but in order to have that kind of leader, the soldier's character must either be trained or the military must select from those who already possess that character.

#### Primary and Secondary Research Questions

The primary research question is: Does the SFQC train the qualities of character that are critical for the initial SF candidate?

The secondary research questions are:

1. What personal qualities of character have made the common SF soldier successful or unsuccessful on the battlefield?
2. Should SF soldiers be trained with respect to these qualities, or must training be limited to the mastery of selected combat-oriented tasks?
3. Should the end state be continually adjusted in order accommodate the quality and or culture of a candidate, or should he be required to adopt the traditional US SF culture?

### Delimitation

This thesis does not attempt to quantitatively compare programs of instruction of yesteryear and now. It is also not within the scope of this paper to determine or outline the origins of the current enemy or his potential impact. Additionally, this thesis does not quantitatively examine Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) or Phase I of the SFQC. There is a great deal of scholarly work already available on that subject. Lastly, this thesis will not debate the merits of morally-constrained warfare, or “just wars,” as it relates to the value of character within a SF soldier.

### Background

Compared with today’s battlefield, the battlefield of yesteryear and the cold war was relatively easy to understand. The enemy was clearly identifiable, but now the majority of the time he is not. In years past, there was a stability achieved through the superpowers’ policy of Mutually Assured Destruction. If nonstate actors or rogue states got out of line, they were promptly dealt with and put into place.

SF’s role during those years was oriented primarily on countering the “red hordes” of the Soviet Union through special operations behind enemy lines. SF then was largely in a supporting role with respect to conventional forces. Back then, the initial SF candidate had time to learn his trade, and, for the most part, was fairly certain he was not going to be deployed to an area where shots were going to be fired in the near future. He was certain of this because most of the conflicts were of a limited nature, infrequent, and normally did not involve a large amount of forces. The majority of opportunities for real combat missions were usually offered to a very small minority within an already small

special operations community. Even after the Berlin Wall fell, conflicts and missions continued to be limited in scope.

This fact reinforced the merits of maintaining a program of instruction (POI) within the SFQC that had historically worked well enough, assuming that the individual would have a year or two to train with his special forces operational detachment Alpha (SFODA) before a conflict arose. The soldier was trained in basic, infantry-oriented, small-unit tactics, his individual specialty area, and was familiarized with the elements of insurgency through the now famous unconventional warfare (UW) exercise known as “Robin Sage.” This overall paradigm of training was primarily skills-based and did not focus as much on the interaction of the soldier with people, nor did it teach character. It was believed then, and now in large part, that this UW “Robin Sage” experience planted the seeds of cultural awareness, character, and ultimately selflessness, setting the individual up for success on a detachment after allowing him some years to grow and mature.

The collective assumption appeared to be that the individual, having graduated from the SFQC with a collection of skills sets, would then perfect his knowledge, maturity, and cultural awareness while on a team or SFODA. People felt they had time to learn through experience; the consensus was that new SF soldiers would gain this experience through multiple joint combined exercises, training, joint planning assistance teams, counternarcotics operations, and other missions that were not considered combat operations. This was simply because very few teams had been given the opportunity to conduct combat operations, overt, covert or clandestine, since the Vietnam War. That is not the case now. New graduates from the SFQC are finding themselves on real targets in

combat performing as part of an SFODA usually within 180 days of graduation, sometimes in as short as one week. These soldiers find themselves working both unilaterally and, more often than not, in a combined manner with some sort of irregular or host nation force. That is the SF charge: to work by, with, and through other people and units in order to accomplish the mission. Yet despite the incredibly changed nature of the battlefield, the SFQC had remained oriented on what is still a “cold war” approach, in large part, until the turn of this century. Though this approach was feasible in years past, the force simply does not have the luxury anymore of an unfocused use of time or a blurred understanding of the tasks that must be mastered to dominate today’s battlefield. More specifically, the tragedy of the attacks on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 woke everyone from the cold-war induced stupor that stubbornly clutched to an antiquated training model that simply did not address the current battlefield.

The incredibly increased demand for SF soldiers on the battlefield today has also created enormous pressures to produce these soldiers quickly; however, this requirement has flown in the face of special operations forces (SOF) institutional truths: humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, SOF can not be mass produced, and competent SOF can not be created after an emergency occurs. Many people in the SF community feel that this increased demand has forced multiple violations of those truths and caused a degradation of standard.

SFAS is getting it right within the constraints under which it must operate. SFAS selects soldiers based on three general concerns: Is the soldier physically fit; does the soldier possess adequate intelligence to pass the course and be productive on a SFODA; and lastly, does he get along well with others? These three questions are general

indicators of character, or whether an individual has been disciplined enough to prepare himself and whether he has sacrificed in some measurable way to achieve what he said he really wanted to do. SFAS has incorporated or reinstituted a number of events that do give assessors an idea of where a given student may fall within a spectrum of “acceptable” character performance. However, the period for assessing those behavioral characteristics is short. Given the nature of the events and the lack of adequate manning within the company that runs SFAS, many soldiers’ character goes unchecked. Though this unit has initiated numerous evaluative events designed to elicit whether a given soldier has the “backbone” to stand firm on what he knows is right or wrong, based on a common understanding of the Judeo-Christian ethic, it simply does not have the personnel or time to adequately observe all the students and absorb the pertinent details.

This problem exists because there are 450 to 550 students in each class, observed by a total of twenty to twenty-four assessor personnel. Those figures equate to approximately one assessor to twenty-two candidates over a twenty-four-day period, a period in which the assessor does not work continuously. What is left is the process of screening out the worst at the expense of never quite fully assessing the rest. The impact then is that the rest of the course continues the training and assessment process for these students, acting as redundant filters designed to ensure that the right personnel graduate from the course. This practice though, runs counter to the current assumption that once a student is through SFAS, that he is now a member of the SF brotherhood and only needs to be trained in order to take his rightful place on a team.

The author of this paper was the commander of Phase II of the SFQC, also known as C Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group from June 2003 to June

2005. During the author's tenure there, there was not a day that went by without analyzing, reworking, and struggling with this issue of how to increase production yet retain quality in the product. The author saw the organization change from a quarterly-run course with 250 students, to a quarterly course with 450 students, to a course run twenty times a year with ninety students in each course. Though the structure of the Phase II course did not change, remaining thirty-five days in length, the curriculum and methodology did. Transformation was a watchword in this unit, and the men of the company were the catalysts for much of it. Good ideas abounded, especially in the area of what tasks should be taught in the course and to what level of expertise students should have to demonstrate proficiency in those areas. This led to an oversaturation of training plans, none of which were properly resourced with money, time or personnel, let alone synchronized with a clearly articulated end state. At the crux, there was, and continues to be, a great deal of talk about how SF must adapt, change, transform, and evolve, in order to meet the current asymmetric threat. There is a great deal of talk about how SF must train its soldiers to dominate in this "morally ambiguous" environment, where mission success will often be pitted ambiguously against the very core beliefs that SF soldiers are encouraged to adopt and to develop.

With all the rhetoric and current Army sound biting, however, organizationally there has been an unwillingness to address the importance that character, more specifically, the role that morality plays in the soldiers' collective ability to succeed. In the SFQC, training that is focused on character, and why it is so important to military operations in general, as well as special operations in particular, is simply not there. Presumably, this is so because character is either too hard to define and teach in this

politically sensitive environment, or too many leaders do not really think it matters, or people think that it is learned as a by-product through certain types of training. This situation is excruciatingly reminiscent of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the founding organization of special operations in the United States, and its plight to find the right people to do the job.

This issue is further exacerbated by the increased demand for SF. Currently, every event which has the potential to fail a student in the SFQC is closely scrutinized in order to ensure that the student has ample opportunity to achieve a standard. The introduction of additional and critical “must pass” events that are based in character performance could potentially degrade the flow of soldiers filling the force. Historically, over the past twenty years, the average number of graduates from the SFQC has been approximately 250 to 300 per year. With the advent of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, and the subsequent initial success in Afghanistan, the Secretary of Defense directed the need for increased numbers of SF soldiers. The former production of 250 to 300 graduates per year was simply not enough to man a more robust SF which centered on the creation of an additional battalion of operators per SF group. That additional battalion equates to approximately 250 additional operators, or SFODA members, per group, and, in fact, the five additional battalions across the five active duty SF groups equate to an overall increase of another group plus (Department of Defense 2006, 43). In response, the United States Army Special Operations Command and the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School transformed the SFQC, and they are continuing this process of change now, to more efficiently produce the number and quality of soldiers needed today. The issue is that a formal end state for the graduate of the SFQC remains



unclear and that results in an inconsistent product that graduates from the course.

Ultimately, it risks the future of the force, potentially placing less-than-qualified personnel on teams that have strategic impact.

The end state for SF training can best be defined as the sum group of character attributes, mental abilities, and skill sets necessary to dominate in today's contemporary operational environment. In order to accomplish this though, the specific skills and attributes that comprise that end state for the SF soldier must be identified in order to ensure the soldier does not merely function on the battlefield, but also dominates it. Additionally, those attributes and skills which enable that dominance must be given priority. Ideally, the end state would continue to be relevant for some time.

The determination of what attributes and skill sets really make the difference for these soldiers, both tactically and operationally, is critical. Moreover, this research must also address who is best to determine which attributes should be trained or not. Equally important is the question of whether or not some or all of the common attributes of character can actually be trained and to what degree.

SF soldiers of today need to adopt and develop the same defining qualities that have historically made the difference in comparison to other soldiers. They were special then, and they continue to be now. However, there appears to be little development and training of character attributes within SF candidates, with the major focus given to the mastery of select combat skills. Certainly the promotion of the Army leadership values and the SF core values is a part of today's SFQC, but, unfortunately, these attributes and their influence on the individual are usually relegated to a position of compartmentalized unimportance. The other side of that argument is that new SF soldiers must graduate with

some contemporary lethal skills that will enable them to dominate the modern nonlinear battlefield. They must be taught the specific applications of tactical skill and the cognitive ability to apply the instruments of national power within their ability and sphere of influence.

### Discussion

The qualities that have defined SF soldiers throughout history build upon one value: sacrifice. The men on the teams call it heart. From that one value stem all of the other redeeming qualities that have made the difference time and again on the battlefield. Sacrifice, rather “self-sacrifice,” manifests itself in a myriad of ways, but they are readily apparent on the ground: does a soldier stay awake on security; is he disciplined enough to keep his physical training consistent; does he pitch in when there is a nasty task to attend to, like cleaning latrines, or is he the first to eat or sleep? Self-sacrifice places the needs of others and the unit over the needs of the individual. Loyalty, excellence, duty, honor, integrity and personal courage require a person to give of himself. SF core values echo much of the same: warrior ethos, professionalism, innovation, versatility, cohesion, character, and cultural awareness. They all mandate that the individual step back and consider the other person or the team before himself. That is the difference between a real warrior and the “summer soldier and sunshine patriot” that Thomas Paine spoke of on December 1776 (Paine 1776).

Skill sets in the SFQC, even to this day, are still in large part based on “Cold War” assumptions and potential scenarios, which decreases training relevance. Some of those attributes and skill sets are transcendent, regardless of the operant environment, but some may not be as relevant. Colonel William Donovan, founder of the OSS, established

a rigorous screening program and a follow-on training program that produced operators who were capable of operating independently, on teams, or with foreign resistance elements. His protégé, then Captain Aaron Banks, developed the same sort of unit for the US Army, the Special Forces, when he became a colonel. In both cases, the training focused on an eclectic array of tasks and exercises that trained the individual to operate and succeed in a multitude of environments, often morally ambiguous, with little to no guidance. This research will explore what end states they may have had and how they could apply now.

### Scope

The scope of this thesis is to address whether or not the SFQC is preparing forces as best as possible to find, engage, dominate, and win this war on terrorism. The context of this research is based in qualitative historical comparison of SF or elite soldiers within various armies, their training, and an analysis of their relevance on the future battlefield. These forces arguably have been deemed most appropriate to fight this war, but the selection of skill sets, the attributes to be developed, and the level to which they must be mastered are what need clarity. Any discussion of a training end state is incomplete without addressing the external factors that drove the requirement for such an end state in the first place. In the case of the SFQC, the external factor that drives the end state should be not only the current enemy and the way he fights, but also the best estimate on the likely adversary ten to twenty years from now. As such, this thesis will identify and generally describe both the current and potential future enemy. Additionally, this thesis will cover the historical trends and patterns of attributes and skill sets associated with

successful SF soldiers, as well as their predecessors, analyzing whether some of these patterns transcend the decades.

The research question and subordinate questions will be explored and answered through three means primarily. The first will center on the analysis of more elite, effective or unconventional units and their leaders throughout history, in the effort to identify common denominators of character that were integral to their success or failure. This necessarily will be a qualitative study in large part, with the focus on collecting examples of the role that current values training and skills training in SF soldiers have played throughout history. Secondly, a survey will be conducted with the aim of determining whether the presence of character, or the lack thereof, within recent graduates of the SFQC, has had a positive or negative impact on SF operations. This information can then be compared to what is being currently trained.

### Importance

In any school environment, a struggle develops between the proposed end state for the graduate and the need for increased numbers of said graduates. In fact, in any leadership or professional environment, military or business, a tug occurs between the current requirement for production of numbers and the institutional insurance of quality. End state, for the purposes of this paper, refers to the collection of character attributes and skill sets within a given individual developed from specific courses of training. The SFQC is no exception to this, and, in this case in particular, the lack of a clearly defined end state for the graduate of the SFQC could potentially have far reaching strategic impact. The problem is that people either attempt to define the end product too vaguely or

they do not want to define it at all for fear of limiting the quality or quantity of the product at the end of the course in some way.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, there have been several approaches to the subjects, evaluation, and sequencing of those subjects within the SFQC. The SFQC continues to emphasize training specified tasks that have historically been part of the course since the inception of the OSS, such as small-unit tactics, combatives, and physical training, but the course has left the training of character out of the equation, or at least relegated it to a position of secondary importance (Banks 1986, 8). This was the focus of training from the time the OSS was formed, through the formation of SF, and through the Viet Nam Era, and continued all the way to the late 1990s. There was a reliance on the selection process, a reliance that continues to this day, based on the presumption that in most cases the process would select the right man to train. The idea of training character was not considered for it was assumed the recruiting and selection process would identify that person of moral courage and backbone, freeing up the training personnel to focus on tactics, planning, language, and others.

In his book, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46*, M. R. D. Foot thoroughly outlines the special operations executive (SOE) recruiting and training process. Initially, the SOE would fill its ranks through personnel well known to various members of the organization. The unit would occasionally put out routine requests to the services for personnel who spoke foreign languages, but primarily relied on the staff to make recommendations of personnel they knew (Foot 1986, 46). These personnel were often men and women of import and position, schooled in known quality schools, who were financially independent (Foot 1986, 47). As the organization grew,

however, this unit recruited based upon operational need, drawing personnel from all social strata, as well as several foreign countries.

The primary source for the understanding of the OSS selection is its book on the evaluation of men, written in 1948 by the OSS assessment staff. In this book, the staff outlines its selection criteria, method of testing and evaluation, and the specific objective and administration of each event. This book is of incomparable value because the objective they were hoping to achieve still remains very similar to what SF is trying to do today.

Two biographies on William J. Donovan proved helpful in gaining an insight into the man who led the charge in the creation of SF's foundational organization, the OSS. *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan*, by Anthony Cave Brown, and *Donovan: America's Master Spy*, by Richard Dunlop thoroughly detail this man's life, pursuits, and dreams. In both volumes William J. Donovan is characterized as a hard-working second-generation son of an Irish immigrant, honed through years of Catholic upbringing, who rose to be both independently wealthy and a man of far-reaching political power.

Stewart Alsop's book, *Sub Rosa: The O.S.S. and American Espionage*, written in 1946, confirms the same assessment of Donovan's background, upbringing, and personality. Donovan consistently served as a model of the behavior he was looking for in his agents, and this is evidenced by his actions, how he is remembered, and his words. He once stated "the credit for his organization should go to the men who volunteered for duty with the express understanding that they would never get any credit" (Alsop 1946, 26). These men were the first "quiet professionals" from whence SF draws its unofficial motto and the crux of its organizational character. Alsop describes Donovan as an

“ebullient Irishman with an expansive personality, a ready wit, and a penchant for doing the things which not only needed doing, but which nobody else would ever think of doing” (Alsop 1946, 11). The OSS thrived under his leadership and example, which was heavily influenced by two factors: his upbringing and his relationship with Great Britain and the SOE.

Colonel Aaron Bank’s book, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces*, relates a similar account. His account of his own experiences with the OSS and the SOE during World War II was almost identical to that reported by Foot. The organization stressed training of tactical tasks, guerilla warfare, physical training, and combatives, but the training or evaluation of character was noticeably absent for the most part. This book captured the interim period between the disbanding of the OSS and the formation of SF, and continued to reinforce the concept that character is something recruited or selected for, not something to be trained.

Shannon French, a professor at the United States Naval Academy, wrote another valuable book on the ethics of warriors: *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present*. This work emphasizes that there are two reasons warriors across the millennia have embraced codes. The first and readily apparent reason stems from functionality, specifically, a unit or organization will cease to function when trust is not present (French 2003, 7). Trust in warrior-like organizations is developed through time and consistent sacrifice for the team. The act of sacrifice of oneself is a concept central to the majority of ethical codes. It is that trust that enables the individual and the organization to achieve the mission and succeed.



The other reason that French advocates as the primary reason warriors have codes is to protect the warrior himself. The average man's natural disgust at the inevitable horrific scenes of war, scenes that he must see and often has to take part in to merely survive, is often in direct opposition to the values of the warrior's very culture. This creates a deep sense of betrayal and loathing from which the warrior often never recovers, and ultimately results in an alienation from the very society he avowed to defend (French 2003, 5). Without a code, French suggests, the warrior is frequently unable to justify the actions that he is forced to take during war or to rationalize his participation in deeds directly conflicting with the values of his society.

French proffers this commonality amongst several warrior codes across several millennia, that is that these codes, regardless of nationality, serve the soldier by legitimizing his actions. She argues that these codes, this embracing of noble character is meant to both restrain warriors as much as it is for the good of others (French 2003, 231). Overall, this work compares and contrasts the codes of the ancient Greeks, Romans, the Vikings, Medieval Knights, Native American Warriors, Chinese Warrior Monks, and the Japanese Samurai.

The demonstration of the modern day warrior code of SF is thoroughly described and documented in Linda Robinson's book *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces*. This book covers the recent history of SF from Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989 to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The author couples the retracing of this history with experiences of personnel still in SF who were actually there in the battles or operations. This book is significant because it gives insight into the level of performance through the various operations by SF soldiers. From this assessment of their performance

and the facts of the various accounts, an understanding of current character trends in SF can be gleaned. Major General Geoffery Lambert, former commanding general of the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, was quoted in this book saying, “By simply living outside of the firebases and working with local forces, we acquire considerable information of great value. We are good at this because of our combination of high tech, low tech, muscle and the fact we live in Third World countries as a way of life” (Robinson 2004, 366). Robinson, like Major General Lambert, describes the common SF soldier as one who is both fiercely loyal, street savvy, competent, and keenly aware of others. Overall the book shows the impact of character, training, and personality of select SF soldiers over the past two decades of military operations.

William McRaven, in his book, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, centers on specific special operations, the preparations made to execute them, the political situation surrounding them, and the results achieved. Through close examination, the attributes of character and specific skill sets that made these operators successful will become apparent. The operations on which McRaven focuses range from the German attack of Eben Emael in May 1940 to Operation Jonathan, the Israeli Raid on Entebbe on 4 July 1976. This book evaluates each of the operations by six generic principles of special operations: simplicity, security, speed, purpose, surprise, and repetition. McRaven expands on the doctrinal definition of purpose, from the standard understanding that it is the primary reason one executes the task, to include the element of personal commitment. Without such commitment, the chance for success of an operation is severely jeopardized. McRaven quotes Otto

Skorzeny, who echoes the same sentiment, “When a man is moved by pure enthusiasm and the conviction that he is risking his life in a noble cause . . . he provides the essential elements for success” (McRaven 1996, 23). Skorzeny, a highly decorated German Officer, led a highly successful glider-borne special operation commando raid in 1943 to rescue the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini. His comments speak to the kind of man who has the character to understand that there are in fact causes worth risking one’s life.

Governmental reports were also consulted and one of the primary sources is the report by Ableson, written in 1954 soon after the formation of the SF by Banks, entitled “Factors Related to the Effectiveness of Special Forces Personnel.” The purpose of the study was to identify distinguishable characteristics that could be used for screening criteria for the right men for SF (Ableson 1954, 1). The group focused on determining a man’s suitability by his past accomplishments, the estimation of his usefulness from what is known about his performance during training, and what others estimate his personal characteristics to be. This report has been of immeasurable value because it gives factual testimony to the very same problems that are being encountered in the SFQC today, and the way they developed to solve the problem.

The Army Research Institute published several reports on this subject over the past twenty years. Most recently, in April 2005, Tara Carpenter published Report 1833, “Special Forces Interpersonal Performance Assessment System.” The purpose behind this document was to discover a means of evaluating and training interpersonal performance categories and dimensions, because these skills are critical to SF since the unit’s uniqueness stems from its ability to work by, with, and through other people. Though the interpersonal performance categories and dimensions look markedly similar to the

components of leadership, the research conducted to produce the report gives a current representation of some common character traits in SF now in 2005.

Another book that was of some historical value was Shillingford's *The Elite Forces Handbook of Unarmed Combat*. Unarmed combat, or combatives, is at the very core of the warrior, and it is therefore an integral part woven throughout the fabric of the SF psyche. Combatives are focused on killing, unlike martial arts which are oriented on self-defense. This book outlines the historical origins of this basic part of the collective warrior culture as it relates to each major country. The author details the values of a given culture and the linkage of those values to being effective at being a warrior. This work is insightful because it embraces the brutal reality of a warrior's trade and explains the importance of mindset and character as it relates to that trade.

A good deal of work has been done on the topic of the importance of character in SF, critical skill sets, and former training methodologies. The information provides the necessary historical background both from a procedural perspective, meaning the documentation of various screening processes over the years, and from an operational perspective stemming from the historical accounts of actual special operations. The detailed analysis of the screening processes demonstrated that the measuring of a man's worth is a complex undertaking, but one worth taking. Clearly, there is a pattern of historically documented similar desirable attributes within the numerous examples of right men for SF. Those analyses, coupled with the study of key figures within SF and its predecessors, as well as the analysis of the personnel involved in the multiple successful special operations over the years, produce a generalized idea of the character and its impact upon the force.

## CHAPTER 3

### ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The goal of this paper is to determine whether or not the SFQC is training the necessary character skill sets in order to enable future SF warriors to dominate on the asymmetric adaptive battlefield. In order to do this a few things must be known. A common definition of character must be set forth, and its important must be expanded upon. Also, a familiarization with the current POI must be established in order to properly understand what is being taught coached and mentored now in the SFQC. Equally important is the collection of data from the force in the field now. Lastly, criteria, as well as specific observable indicators of those criteria, need to be developed to measure whether the desired character attributes are present or not within a given group of people. These latter two tasks will be addressed through a survey administered to individuals who have deployed with SF personnel who have recently graduated from the SFQC and those who have been in SF for some time.

While analysis of definitions and surveys will render some understanding of character, it is relatively minimal without the historical perspective. The historical analysis of this paper proposes to examine those values of several elite warrior sects over the past two millennia as well as key figures in the history of SF. However, this research will endeavor to go into the detail of worldviews these groups and men held, in order to determine if in fact they lived up to their espoused values or not. All too often, people are given to forget the painful, or at least, to minimize the pain of past events, remembering primarily the good. It is this perception that has often clouded the memories of these figures and groups heralded as great warriors. Specifically, these nostalgic, yet

incomplete, memories minimize the character flaws, integrity issues, and maturity problems that reside within many of the men claimed as fathers of SF. Historical analysis is the only way to gain a comprehensive perspective on this issue of character and whether it really mattered or not.

The cost of ignoring this type of analysis is ignorance. It is a self-induced ignorance producing a perception that misses the mark, which leaders use to justify current training and wartime policies. Yet, SF as an institution, and like most people, ignores the bad that has past and remembers only the good. This ignorance actually constitutes an unwritten endorsement which is seen even today in SF. It is an endorsement which provides that latitude to overlook the harder issue of teaching and training character while embracing the more easily defined and trained tasks.

That perception would claim, and in fact still does proclaim, that the training of character is unrealistic. The major charge made against the training of character is that it is too difficult to exactly define what should be considered desirable. However, the Army and SF have already chosen and published value sets, a first step toward inculcation. There remain many more steps to actually have the members of an organization adopt such values.

Measures of these values or quantifiable indicators of these values are often difficult to define. This is due primarily to the subjective nature of the matter of character. Current data about the character of SF graduates are also required to begin to understand the character of SF now. The research tool that has been used to address this is a survey that is designed to elicit commentary about the character of recent SF graduates and the impact of their character on operations. The target audiences for the

survey are mid-level to senior special operations personnel, both officer and noncommissioned officer, who have deployed to either combat or training with a recent graduate from the SFQC.

The survey contains ten questions: four questions established specific demographics on the survey participant; three questions subjectively rated the character of the soldiers that the participant had deployed with; three questions were short essays requiring the participant to compare recent graduates with older team members.

The intent of the first four questions was to establish the participant's experience base, whether or not he had deployed with an SF soldier to either training or combat, his current level of responsibility, and his level of experience at the time he deployed with the SF soldiers. Question one determined if the participant had deployed with an SF member or not. The purpose of this question was simply to screen the participant's qualifications. If the participant had not deployed with a recent graduate, the person is then informed that further participation is unnecessary because he does not have the expertise to complete the survey. Questions two and three requested the participant to identify his current rank and the rank he held when he went on the deployment identified in question one. The purpose of these two questions is threefold. First, the current rank gives a sense of the individual's cumulative experience; the second question displays potential biases such as age, perspective, experience level at the time of the deployment, and other potential prejudices. Lastly, these two questions on rank identify the span of time that has elapsed between the deployment experience and the documentation of the experience.

The next three questions required the participant to subjectively evaluate the character of the SF soldier. Questions five and six required the participant to numerically rate, from one to seven (One being the best and seven being the worst), how well the individual exhibited both the Army leadership values and the SF Core Values. Question seven required the participant to compare the individual's character with older SF personnel. Both questions also identified the hypothetical example that would rate a "four." With reference to the question on the Army leadership values (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage) (FM 3-05.20 2001, 1-20), that example or comparative baseline was defined as follows: a SF soldier who does not wittingly or openly display either disloyalty or disrespect; is competent in the basic skills for his job; rates the needs of others and the unit equal to his own; understands the importance of honor, integrity and personal courage but sometimes allows personal choices to supersede them to the detriment of himself and the unit. The source of this definition stems from the author's twelve years of experience on three separate SFODAs in three different SF Groups, as both an enlisted soldier and an officer on a SFODA.

With reference to question six, the rating of the soldier's ability to display the SF Core Values (warrior ethos, professionalism, initiative, versatility, cohesion, character, and cultural awareness) (FM 3-05.20 2001, 1-20), a baseline was also identified. The baseline of "four" identified the SF soldier who: usually displayed the spirit, intensity, tenacity and courage to fight and win regardless of the odds; proficient in his job; often requires direction or guidance; is usually task-centric focused to the point that situational awareness is often reduced; gets along satisfactorily with others; understands the importance of cultural awareness, but may not dedicate much time to it. The same rating



system applied in this question with a rating of one being the best and seven being the least.

Question seven requires the participant to comprehensively compare the participant's perception of the character of these soldiers with other older SF personnel. There are six responses to this question: significantly weaker, somewhat weaker, about the same, somewhat stronger, significantly stronger, and "not applicable." This question is the third numerically oriented question, albeit the verbiage is different, designed to force the survey participant to give some thought to these evaluations because of an individual's inherent desire to be consistent.

The last section of the survey contains three short essay questions designed to elicit candid, specific examples of either good or bad character within this group of younger SF soldiers. Each was focused on specific indicators of character.

Question eight reads: In comparison to older team members, did the younger SF soldiers require additional or different attention in order to effectively integrate into the team? If so, can you describe the attention required and why? The time required to integrate onto a team is a potential indicator of how well he gets along with others. It is also an indicator of his ability to assess, adapt and learn in a new environment. A person who takes longer than most may be showing a propensity to become overwhelmed, an insecurity of some type, a lack of versatility, perhaps a lack of personal courage, or maybe some sort of unresolved personal or behavioral issue.

Question nine requests that the participant identify whether the soldier had more or fewer Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) offenses than the older SF personnel, and if so, what the nature and type of offense was. UCMJ offenses, such as driving while

intoxicated, spousal or child abuse, drug abuse, fraud, adultery, insubordination and the like are all superficial behavioral manifestations that indicate that there are much deeper issues with this person and his character. It demonstrates that there is a problem with the way this person makes values-based decisions because he chose to risk his livelihood to indulge his immediate want or perceived need. So it follows that if this soldier would choose to endanger himself, his career, or his family in order to pursue his immediate want, as opposed to showing self-restraint, he could also apply the same decision-making process while on the job or worse, deployed in combat.

Question ten focuses on whether these soldiers exhibited any tangible signs of adaptive thinking and assessing. Specifically, the question required the participant to compare the ability of younger SF soldiers to rapidly assess situations, decide and execute solutions with the ability of older SF soldiers to do the same.

Whereas the survey is designed to gauge the current perception of the character within SF, the understanding of that perception would be extraordinarily limited without a thorough exploration of definition. Definitions of character are as widely diverse as there are different religions in the world. In 1979, *Webster's Dictionary* defined character as an individual's pattern of behavior or personality, moral constitution, moral strength, self-discipline, fortitude and reputation (304). The 2006, *Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary*, defines character as: the complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, group, or nation. The 2004, *American Heritage On-line Dictionary* defines it similarly: Moral or ethical strength. A description of a person's attributes, traits, or abilities. The begged question is of course, what type of moral constitution or personal attributes is desired?

General William G. Boykin, a veteran of SF for more than twenty years of his thirty-five year career, stated that three things truly stood out amongst the great SF soldiers with whom he had worked over the years. First, they all had integrity. They were men who were consistent; they were dependable and they were who they said they were. Secondly, they all had capability to adaptively think, assess and take action in the absence of guidance. Lastly, and most importantly, he stated that the quality of moral courage was vitally important because in order to be adaptive, initiative taking, men of integrity, one must be grounded in a moral code which forms the foundation from which one can adapt or flex (Boykin 2006).

Many would argue that the POI at the SFQC may not specifically train character, but it is most certainly used as a criterion to select soldiers, and is trained indirectly during several events throughout the course. The training of character falls into what many would call the affective domain, or that part of everyone's life that includes the confluence of intellectual, emotive, social, and economic perceptions of one's position. It is a known fact that character is trained experientially more so than it is cognitively. Consequently, character training is an additional benefit of many different types of training events, though it is not the primary focus.

The SFQC primarily relies on Phase I, SFAS, to select soldiers with the appropriate character for SF. Over the twenty-four-day period, the soldiers are tested and evaluated through a series of events: battery tests, land navigation, physical training (runs, rucksack marches, log drills), strenuous team-oriented events, and situational exercises. The structure of the course is designed to elicit the most accurate assessment within the twenty-four-day course. The issue that has been previously identified is that

Phase I is not foolproof, and some people do slip by the standard for character and other areas. Senior officers have likened the rest of the SFQC to that of the trek of a fish going upstream. Each of the subsequent phases is like an additional sieve or net that the student must negotiate.

The other phases do conduct events that indirectly provide environmental, physical, and mental stressors which may or may not train an individual's character, but that is not the primary objective for that training. The training is geared toward the establishment of specific critical skill sets, not to document the behavioral patterns of individuals. To document these patterns of outward manifestations through an individual's speech, gestures, interaction with others, and decisions the individual makes, would make the conduct of the course exorbitantly long. It would also draw the focus away from the primary training which is to impart specific skill sets that are critical to the soldier as well as that of character training.

Phase II of the SFQC focuses primarily on small-unit tactics at the SFODA level. This training is designed around multiple simulated combat operations in the field under conditions that approach those one might experience in combat. These operations often place multiple stressors on an individual to expose him to the same constraints and stress he may face. A strange thing happens when a designated leader allows himself to become disoriented on a rainy, cold, night, with an aggressive enemy attacking, simultaneously trying to orchestrate a countertactic, take care of casualties, and update his position. That strange thing is that a person's true character comes out, manifested through his speech, gestures and decision making. Phase II is unique in that this is the point where the students are formed into student SFODAs comprised of twelve to fifteen men each.

Assigned to each SFODA are two to three instructors whose job it is to train these individuals to function as a special operations team.

It is in this environment that many soldiers have difficulty because they are now depended on and they must depend on others if they are to succeed. Each week their peers have the opportunity to evaluate each other on their performance as either leaders or followers under stressful environmental conditions, and often they are quite blunt. They are blunt because they most often deal with character-related issues and not performance issues. The Army's "Action, Condition, Standards" framework adequately addresses the performance issues. Character issues are harder to define and prove. These peer evaluations are of tremendous value because they document what an individual does when nobody is looking, giving the outsider a potentially accurate glimpse of the individual's character. Of course their value is considered in light of the instructor's and commander's input, but their value as a indicator of positive or negative character remains unsurpassed because the students realize that the soldiers who train with them now will be the soldiers on real SFODAs in the future. Therefore, the incentive is there to insure the right personnel are identified and trained.

Phase III for all SF soldiers is focused on their specific military occupational specialty. There are five general subject areas: weapons and tactics, engineering and demolitions, satellite and radio communications, advanced combat trauma and medical training, and special operations planning and leadership. When the soldiers get to this phase they are separated into their respective areas and they train with those groups primarily. Each of the subject areas is instructed by a specially designated company of cadre whose job it is train the soldiers in their specialty, mentor them, and evaluate their

retention of the skills. Character is observed through various events such as daily physical training, range exercises, academic exercises and occasional field exercises, but the focus of the training, as is the case with phase II is on learning the tasks at hand.

Phase IV is the portion of the course where everything comes together. The students are reformed into their student SFODAs, given approximately two weeks of UW training, organization and management, and then inserted into a two-week, tactical, UW training exercise known as ROBIN SAGE. During this exercise the soldiers are required to interact, build rapport, train, and fight with an indigenous force against a numerically superior, better equipped force. Throughout the exercise, members of the SFODA are placed in situations where not only tactics and training but also their ethical foundation and their worldview are evaluated. During the two weeks prior to the insertion into ROBIN SAGE, the students participate in a three-day period called a mission readiness exercise, where they rehearse all the skills that are critical to their success. A portion of that three-day period is devoted to practicing building rapport with difficult people and the negotiation of actual ethical dilemmas. The issue, of course, is that up to this point the course, which for most has been approximately four to five months, training has been focused exclusively on performance-oriented tasks.

What then happens to the soldier who slips through Phase I, SFAS, with questionable character and continues on through the course? His character deficiency will most probably be noticed and recorded, but he will most likely continue to train, receiving instruction and drill on the multiple tasks respective to his military occupational specialty. He will then probably graduate unless there is some additional catastrophic

indicator of poor character (for example, gross negligence, insubordination, and others).

This happens as a result of higher risk-acceptance with regard to a man's character.

Given that there is only so much time to allocate toward different training priorities, it is understandable that commanders would accept risk on specific character training in favor of other critical hard skills such as instinctive firing techniques, hand-to-hand combat, and trauma management. The problem arises when this soldier, who is proficient in specific performance-oriented tasks, is placed into an ambiguous environment when there are seemingly two bad choices, forcing the individual to assess not only his current situation, but also what the second and third order effects are to the available courses of action open to him. Further complicating the process is the soldier's lack of foundational character, which serves only to confuse the merits and disadvantages of the choices at hand. Usually, in training and real life, a person has only a short period to consider and judge those courses of action, making a decision that could have strategic impact on the mission or devastating personal consequences if the person violates a personal code of ethics in the process (French 2003, 4).

It is evident from this abbreviated review of the POI in the SFQC, that formal character training is generally absent. The only exception to that is an exercise called the Volkmann exercise, which is designed to assess and train the type of character specifically sought in the SF officer specifically. The exercise is experientially-based placing the officer into a foreign location, with little money, requiring him to traverse long distances to link up with strangers. It is designed to place physical, mental, and environmental stressors on the individual for the sole purpose of training the adaptive-thinking process, a process which is grounded in the development of a man's character.

The type of character sought in this exercise, as well as throughout the course, is generally summarized by both the Army Leadership Values and the SF Core Values. However, there is an additional capability which directly stems from these values, and that skill is the ability to adaptively think or critically reason within the context that the Army requires. As was previously outlined, a soldier's ability to adaptively think is directly influenced by the individual's moral and character foundation. If his perspective stems from a moral and character foundation inconsistent with the institution's foundation, he will make decisions that are at best inconsistent, but normally are detrimental to success. This occurs because he views his personal values as more important than the institutions, and that situation degrades teamwork and combat effectiveness.

It is the initial goal of this research is to assess the historical importance of character in SF and elite soldiers of the past, then consider character in light of the methodology used to produce current SF soldiers, and finally compare that with a field assessment of the performance and character of recent graduates. Put another way, this thesis intends to discern what was good from the past, analyze the product currently produced, and then determine if what is being produced actually is what people claim it to be.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

Out of every 100 men, 10 shouldn't even be there, 80 are just targets, nine are the real fighters, and we are lucky to have them, for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a warrior and he will bring the others back. (French 2003, 45)

Samuel Butler said that life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient data, and the selection and training of men to operate and win in this often ambiguous, nonlinear battlefield, follows that same methodology. This chapter will first focus on historically valued attributes of character of various warrior sects, in order to answer the question of what character traits have been useful, if not invaluable, in the past. This perspective will give an overall sense of the common qualities of character that have made warriors successful throughout the ages, but will also identify the potential flaws. The research will then delve into the groups of people known as Generations "X" and "Y," who are the people that now make up the recruiting base for SF. This research explores the natural tendencies, personality traits, and character attributes of these groups in order to understand their trainability and the potential cultural schism between their espoused value system and the Army's. This exploration hopes to determine whether the learning and inculcation of specific organizational character attributes is possible with people who have been immersed in a culture that celebrates the self. Lastly, the current perception of the character of both older and younger SF soldiers will be analyzed through the assessment of a recent survey. The survey queried eighty three special operators, ranging from the sergeant to the general.

The warrior caste and its collective character varies from nation to nation and century to century, and though this character stems largely from varying national self-interests and societal values, there remain a few transcendent truths to be gleaned from historical analysis. This section of the paper focuses on the historical roots of the warrior and the character that grew from those roots. From the Greek citizen-soldier concept, to the Roman centurion, to the Viking king, to the knight of chivalry, to the Chinese warrior monk, to the American Revolutionary soldier, to Robert Rogers's Rangers, to Colonel John Mosby's Rangers, to Bill Donovan and the OSS, to Britain's SOE, to Aaron Banks and the original SF, they all held codes of character based on morals that benefit their nation or government, their group or unit, and the individual.

### The Greek Hoplite

Though there are several warrior cultures that could be explored prior to the Greeks, this culture was chosen as a starting point because it is the bedrock upon which Western nations and governance are built upon. To understand the Greek warrior culture, one must first grasp the fundamental focus of the culture as a whole first. From the eighth century B.C., the concept of the Greek city-state, or *polis*, emerged as a result of radical changes in agricultural production, which created surplus food stocks and a collective desire to retain the land that produced the surplus (Parker 1995, 15). Greek citizens, already accustomed to banding with small groups, given their history of warrior tribes, began to centralize around the areas that produced and sold the food stocks. Citizens banded together and fortified small areas in order to protect their trade, their land, and their livelihood. It is from this perspective that the Greek warrior "hoplite" culture developed. The construct of the *polis* promoted wealth and honor as the highest ends to

be achieved its citizenry. The culture eventually grew to embrace egalitarianism, the promotion of human advancement, and liberalism as it is currently known today. The Greeks knew that these vestiges of their society required protection, and out of that need, and the overall goal of individual honor and wealth, grew a warrior culture that understood the strategic end was for the good of the state. It was important to them because often they were land-holding members of this agrarian-based economy. The means was through the sacrifice of the individual soldier, the hoplite, or heavy infantryman, working in concert as a member of the phalanx.

The Greek hoplite fought from the formidable formation known as the phalanx, a rectangular spear-wielding formation of shield-interlocking, armored warriors where solidarity, loyalty, strength, and honor carried the day. The strength of the phalanx came from the collective strength of the interlocked shields and the spirit that stemmed from the solidarity of the men. The Greek poet Archilochus described the ideal soldier in the seventh century B.C. “I don’t like the towering captain with the spraddly length of leg, one who swaggers in his lovelocks and clean shaves beneath his chin. Give me instead a man short and squarely set upon his legs, a man full of heart, not to be shaken from the place he plants his feet” (Parker 1995, 16). Despite his culture’s focus on the individual, honor, recognition and riches, the soldier was still the one to understand and value sacrifice.

### Pax Romana

Roman culture was similar to the Greeks’ in that there were portions of the populace that embraced the polytheistic belief that humans were merely the recipients of good and evil dependent upon the whims of their gods. However, two main schools of

philosophy arose to counter that perception: Stoicism and Epicureanism. Both schools of thought embraced the idea that one must live according to natural law and that life can be understood through reason. The difference between the two was the object of happiness. To the Epicurean, pleasure was the measure of happiness in life. To the Stoic, virtue was the measure of happiness; virtue for the sake of duty to the state (Feiser 2006, 1).

The Roman soldier held close the worldview of Stoicism, that is, the concept of *gravitas*, or a sense of responsibility or earnestness, grounded in a rational world governed by reason and logic. The Roman Stoic drew his understanding from the school that asserted that happiness can only be achieved by accepting life's ups and downs as the products of unalterable destiny. The stoic held that the good, or virtue, of any one thing comes from the proper use of that thing, (for example, a pen is considered a good pen if the pen writes well). The virtue for the Roman Stoic warrior was the man who committed to soldiering well. The Roman warrior was concerned with defining himself in this life in this capacity and in this function. This is where his virtue lay, for he knew that his virtue was directly linked to his dedication to duty, and he knew that his duty was directly linked to the virtue of the state. Cicero wrote that the greatest loss of any man is that of a loss of character or a lapse in virtue (French 2003, 66).

Despite the civic-based devotion to duty in both the hoplite and the Roman warrior, their idea of right was ultimately based in the construct of their deities in which they believed. Their gods were more aptly described as anthropomorphized creations that resembled gods. Most Greek and Roman gods demonstrated imperfect behaviors that, to this day, are considered wrong or detrimental to oneself or others. Though Zeus consorted with multiple goddesses, he raped or seduced multiple mortal women to

produce demigod offspring. Most notable of his progeny would be the birthing of Heracles. Zeus took the form of Alcemene's husband and seduced her, producing Heracles. There are dozens of other examples, but this demonstrates the secular and selfish focus of these deities, the deities that serve as the example for entire peoples. The impact, of course, is that the foundation upon which the average Roman or Greek, to include its warriors, based his decisions grew from the arbitrary nature of selfishly oriented beings.

### The Viking Way

The Viking culture came into existence and reigned between the period of 793 and 1066 A.D. in Scandinavia and the British Isles. During those centuries, from the time they savagely attacked England's Lindisfarne monastery in A.D. 793, these people have born the stereotype of little more than blue-eyed barbarians in horned helmets. Though popular, the character traits that made these warriors effective were manifold. These Scandinavian warriors, and traders, raided and explored most parts of Europe, southwestern Asia, northern Africa and northeastern North America. Though not remembered for their mercy, the Vikings were effective and fearless warriors. The Vikings embraced a code which emphasized duty to one's king, community and family over all else. Prowess on the battlefield and courage were perhaps the qualities most revered. But at the root, the Viking warrior understood that to maintain his honor he must always keep others first.

He chose to embrace these virtues because he knew that heroic performance in battle would earn him a spot in Valhalla, or their version of an after life. So with the Viking warrior one finds the individual choosing to subordinate his desires in order to satisfy the obligations of his lord and family because this directly supports the group and

he may earn himself recognition of some type through extraordinary effort (Barry 2001, 1).

### Chivalry

The ideal of embracing the subordination of one's agenda for the greater good continues throughout the Middle Ages. This period, from 800 to 1400, was one of warfare and preparation for warfare, and this was chosen as a matter of duty, as well as a matter of necessity. Politically, the feudal system established formal relationships between the lord or vassal owing homage or fealty to the higher king or lord who granted him land. Whereas the Viking was subordinating his desires for the family and country, the knight was doing the same for his lord or king, albeit it was quite locally oriented to the community or fiefdom. It was this group of lords, these vassals, the individuals who retained wealth, who could afford to purchase the armor, the horses, the weapons and the attendants to care for the equipment. It was the job of the knight to defend the kingdom, to fight and win the battles for the king.

Initially, the arrangement was political, even contractual in nature, generating the duty aspect of chivalry, which more often than not motivated medieval knights across Europe. However, it would be remiss to ascribe the motivation as simply materialistically oriented. Chivalry, as was described through the legends of King Arthur by Mallory, Tennyson, and Bullfinch, arose from a growing perception that people should not be oppressed, that they have an inalienable right to live free from the tyranny of every self-serving rival. Bullfinch echoes these same sentiments in his work on mythology.

In such a state of things, the rights of the humbler classes of society were at the mercy of every assailant; and it is plain that, without some check upon the lawless power of the chiefs, society must have relapsed into barbarism. Such checks were

found, first, in the rivalry of the chiefs themselves, whose mutual jealousy made them restraints upon one another; secondly, in the influence of the Church, which, by every motive, pure or selfish, was pledged to interpose for the protection of the weak; and lastly, in the generosity and sense of right which, however crushed under the weight of passion and selfishness, dwell naturally in the heart of man. From this last source sprang Chivalry, which framed an ideal of the heroic character, combining invincible strength and valor, justice, modesty, loyalty to superiors, courtesy to equals, compassion to weakness, and devotedness to the Church; an ideal which, if never met with in real life, was acknowledged by all as the highest model for emulation. (Bullfinch 1856)

Later, toward the end of the first millennium, Pope Urban the II outlawed fighting throughout the week among merchants, laborers, women, children or priests (Foster 2005, 1). Chivalry took on a more spiritual base during this period of the Crusades, ingraining the tenets which still remain today. Concepts of “noblesse oblige” or the acts of giving quarter to one’s enemy if he surrenders or is unarmed, generosity, honor, or never dishonoring one’s character through a lack of integrity, remain to this day as a means to preserve the basic dignity for human life and provide not only limits for the warrior, but also the moral foundation from which to judge.

### Robert Rogers

Major Robert Rogers, father of the Rangers, and historical champion of irregular or guerilla warfare, has long been heralded as an icon, memorialized by Rangers, SF, and SOF personnel for the last two hundred plus years. He is remembered for his arduous operations and exploits, but portions of his character are conveniently forgotten. Though he most assuredly developed and executed the concept of irregular warfare, he had tremendous unresolved integrity, and most probably, maturity problems.

Major Rogers was born of hardy stock in Methuen, Massachusetts in 1731, the son of a small farmer. His family moved further north to Concord, New Hampshire

shortly after he was born, and it was in this environment that he learned to be a leader, a frontiersman, and a warrior. Throughout his childhood and adolescence, he and his family lived on the frontier, a place where harsh weather, Indian raids and adversity were commonplace. It was this adversity that honed the values of personal courage, mental toughness, physical endurance and initiative within Rogers (University of Toronto 2000, 1). It was within this environment that he interacted with many different types of people, from traders to Indians to soldiers to teachers, and from this experience he developed a magnanimity and gregariousness that enhanced a natural tendency toward leadership.

Rogers inculcated these physical and character attributes within the Ranger force he was ordered to create in 1755. He did so primarily through his personal example and hard, difficult training that often included live fire exercises and marksmanship training. This unit was known to operate in the highlands of upstate New York and Canada throughout the year. They were a group of men with the physical tenaciousness and mental hardness to endure the harsh winters and long infiltrations to attack their enemy.

Rogers assumed command of all colonial ranger forces in North America in 1758. The unconventional and adaptive capability of the Rangers was consistently displayed during numerous operations. During one operation, in the winter of 1758, a season typically reserved for inactivity and planning among opposing forces at that time, Rogers' forces raided enemy positions near Lake George by conveying themselves across snow and ice on snowshoes, skates and sleds. Later, in 1759, Roger's Rangers were called to on to conduct a deep infiltration to attack the Abnaki Tribe located far within what is now known as Canada. Using waterborne infiltration over several hundred miles, followed up with a very long overland movement, Rogers personally led the 200 man



Ranger unit in an attack against an Indian tribe that had massacred several hundred colonial soldiers who were retreating under a flag of surrender. The objective was successfully destroyed, reportedly killing 200 Indians (Nedoba 1998, 1).

In a very tangible sense, he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice for his men. Physically, he led the way with his men, suffering the same conditions as they. Financially, throughout the French and Indian War, Rogers paid his soldiers in the very unit that the British had ordered him to create (University of Toronto 2000, 1). He continued this to the point where he went into severe debt in the later years of his life.

Despite his sacrifices, Rogers makes a series of questionable decisions that take him down a road quite inconsistent with the measure of success he experienced in the French and Indian War. Specifically during the raid on the Abnaki village, several references detail a story that claims that Rogers massacred combatants and noncombatants alike. Granted, General Amherst at the time encouraged the men to take revenge for their brothers (Innes 1779, 1). Compounding the issue was the fact that as Roger's Rangers approached the Abnaki camp in Saint Francois, Canada, they saw the several hundred scalps of mostly British personnel or colonists (Saunderson 1876, 79).

With reference to his tactical operations, the British did not wholly trust the Rangers due to the frequent incidents of indiscipline, nor did they believe all that was reported of their alleged successes (University of Toronto 2000, 1). This was evidenced by the fact that the General Gage, the overall British commander in North America, decided to create the 80th Foot Infantry, another "bush-oriented" unit ostensibly to add to the effectiveness of the Queen's and Kings Ranger's that Rogers had formed. It appears likely that this unit was formed because of the reports that discredited Rogers' Rangers,

as well as the commander's legitimacy. This experience apparently began the development of increasing distrust of Rogers, despite his reputed leadership ability.

After the war, Rogers left for London in an attempt to secure some compensation for the funds he expended paying his Ranger companies. It is unclear whether he received monetary compensation, but it is known that he secured command of Fort Michilimackinac at the tip of the southern peninsula of Michigan much to the chagrin of General Gage. This may have been his compensation. One can only assume that General Gage, who would have been the equivalent of a theater commander at the time, would have sensed some disloyalty from Roger's actions going around him to London. Roger's tenure there in Michigan only lasted for approximately two years, whereupon he was recalled and relieved by General Gage for alleged treasonous activity. Apparently, Rogers had made contact with the French through one of his subordinates, Jonathan Carver, allegedly to secure his financial, as well as his political future. Some claim that he was attempting to form his own governance or independent republic in the vicinity of Fort Michilimackinac (Avery 2005, 1).

Later, Rogers attempted to join the ranks of the revolution, approaching General Washington to approve his request to become an officer in the Revolutionary Army. General Washington, who was perhaps aware of his reputation during the French and Indian War, and who most probably knew of the allegations of his supposedly treasonous dealings with the French to secure land, did not allow him to become an officer working for the Revolution. General Washington is reported to have said "[Rogers] is the only man I've ever been afraid of" (Robinson 2005, 1). Major Rogers, immediately put upon,

offered his service to the British, whereupon he ended up fighting against his own people (Wikipedia 2006, 1).

These decisions launched him further into debt, broke the trust of both George Washington and British officers, and ultimately his wife. Though it is not within the scope of this paper to explore the reasons behind these decisions, it is still important to remember that despite Rogers later issues in life, he still made a critical contribution to the British success in the French and Indian War, not to mention the institutional knowledge of asymmetric warfare and the type of leadership needed to conduct it.

#### Francis Marion, aka “The Swamp Fox”

Francis Marion, born in 1732 to parents of Huguenot descent, was a small boy who ended up leading a strategic force that significantly contributed to the defeat of the British during the American Revolution. Marion grew up on a farm, and received an education that appeared to be consistent with most others in the colonies at that time, but he had a confidence that often sparked daring and tenaciousness.

At sixteen he decided to go to sea, orchestrating a job on an ill-fortuned merchant ship bound for the West Indies. It was reported that this ship was struck by some sort of whale that caused the ship to sink, forcing Marion and three others to take refuge in one of the lifeboats (Cummings 2005, 1). He spent a week on that boat, without water, surviving off the blood and flesh of one of the dogs that were aboard that ship. Two of the men died of starvation. Needless to say that this experience dampened his zeal for seaborne adventure, but the story shows his unbridled courage and daringness, a trend that continues throughout his life.

Like Robert Rogers, he gained his trial by fire in the French and Indian War, learning first hand the tactics that work in the terrain common in the colonies (Light 1997, 1). Six years after his ill-fated seaborne adventure, Marion joined the local militia at twenty-two years old under command of his older brother Gabriel. This unit saw no action, but it was here that he learned his soldierly skills. In 1760 he was assigned to Captain William Moultrie's militia company, who was given the task of moving to interdict Indian forces during the Cherokee Wars. Here again, Marion, a young lieutenant, was selected to lead a thirty-man advance guard element to scout out the way to the Cherokee nation. During the trek, the unit had to pass through a gap in the mountainous terrain, known to be protected by the enemy, in the vicinity of the town of Etchoee. The pass was critical operationally because it was the only feasible passage into Cherokee territory. Then Lieutenant Marion boldly assaulted the pass with his platoon, only to face a massive, well-planned ambush that instantly killed twenty-one of his men. It was through this tragic mistake that he learned the savagery of effective guerilla warfare, and despite the experience, he was still characterized as "an active, brave, and hardy soldier; and an excellent partisan officer" by his commanding officer (Light 1997, 1).

In 1780, now Brigadier General Marion took command of the partisan unit formed in and around the Pee Dee River in South Carolina. After only two days in command, he took the unit on its first raid on a small Loyalist encampment. Attacking at dawn, he enjoyed some momentary success, but realized he was faced with force of equivalent size, or better, with strong resolution. He therefore opted to feign retreat into the Pee Dee Swamp, only to lure the Loyalist force into a devastating ambush that

destroyed the enemy force (Light 1997, ch. 2). Marion would continue to use this unconventional tactic over the next two years with great success. This event showed his ability to rapidly assess a situation and change plans or tactics to best achieve the mission at hand. Like Rogers, he shared in the same sufferings that his men had to endure. Marion was lean and tough, and his men saw it. So did the British. Marion once invited a British officer to sup with him while they negotiated a prisoner exchange. General Marion could only offer him sweet potatoes and water, as that was all the food that he and his men had. The British officer was dumbfounded that an officer would suffer such conditions, not to mention somewhat put upon for being himself subjected to the same. This officer later remarked to his commanding officer “I have seen an American general and his officers, without pay, and almost without clothes, living on roots and drinking water; and all for LIBERTY! What chance have we against such men!” (Mckown nd., 1).

General Marion continued to live and fight this way for the next two years, choosing to share in the same hardships and lead the men through challenges. It is apparent that the concept of sacrifice for the common good, courage, and endurance were integral to General Marion’s character. However, he also had a situational awareness that stemmed from his collection of life experiences that enabled him to rapidly assess and adapt accordingly. General Marion was acutely aware of compartmentalizing sensitive information, to the point that his men often took their cues from the General’s cook, observing if he was taking time to prepare a quick meal or some of their more standard fare. General Marion, also had a thorough appreciation for terrain, the enemy, and his own forces. His men would often lament the General’s favorite time to march was at the setting sun, which of course inevitably meant they would march through the night (Light

1997, ch. 2). Interestingly, despite all of the General's insightfulness, devotion to his men, and adaptive ability, he still retained a bit of impetuosity. General Marion, who is credited with leading the unit that strategically drew British forces from the main effort of the Southern Campaign, thereby creating the conditions for success at Guilford Courthouse and the British defeat at Yorktown, nearly missed the opportunity to create and command this unit. History has it that, in 1780, prior to General Cornwallis seizing Charleston, South Carolina, General Marion had attended a party where the host had locked all the guests in a room on the second floor of his house. The host did this presumably to enable his guests to imbibe and indulge in revelry. Marion reportedly did not wish to partake in the festivities, but also did not want to disturb his host to open the door. So the solution the General decided upon was to slip out the second story window and leap to the ground to his escape. He did not count on the fracture of his ankle that resulted from the leap, whereupon his men quickly transported him out of town to receive medical care (Light 1997, ch. 2). General Cornwallis seized Charleston shortly thereafter, capturing many rebel forces, save a few, and General Marion was among that few. The reader can draw his own conclusions as to why General Marion felt it necessary to leap from the window; the author chalks it up to youthful bravado and situational poor judgment, albeit it was that poor judgment that prevented his capture and enabled him subsequently to strategically contribute to the forging of this nation.

#### John Singleton Mosby

Colonel John Singleton Mosby, "The Gray Ghost" as some have termed him, born in Powhatan, Virginia, in 1833, was consistently described as small and generally sickly as a youth. Despite this physical disadvantage, it is asserted that this condition, along

with his mother's consistently stern chastisement, formed the headwaters for developing the future aggressive, unconventional, and often ostentatious Colonel John Mosby (Coombs and Smith nd., 1).

General Robert E. Lee commended Colonel Mosby more often than any other Confederate soldier because of his daring, professionalism, and effect (Coombs and Smith nd., 3). However, this outstanding combat leader also carries the dubious honor of being labeled a criminal at best, and a coward by some. Which version depends on which side, Union or Confederate, is asked. Mosby is generally looked on as a hero by people in the South because of the daunting and fearless reports they heard about his exploits, not to mention his strategic effect he and his unit had on the Union Army. On the other hand, Mosby was viewed as a criminal and dishonorable by most in the Union Army because of his ability to pit his strengths against his opponent's weaknesses. This ability coupled with a natural love of discipline, honor, and a flair for the flamboyant, made this man a remarkable figure in UW history. As such, a study of his demeanor and values, as evidenced through his choices, will illustrate the impact of his character on his ability to lead and adaptively orchestrate (University of Virginia nd., 1).

His efforts, and that of his unit, the 43rd Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, is credited with inciting such a trepidation among the Union Command in and around Washington, that they felt it necessary to maintain a substantial force to protect the capital and fight what would now be called an insurgent band. The unit's focus was primarily on the lines of communication, that is, the railroads and couriers traveling on normal roads. Additionally they would attack Union outposts in order to deny the enemy of resources and replenish their own stores. Colonel Mosby continued this insurgent offensive for the

entire two plus years he was in command prior to the end of the war, tying up significant Union forces solely dedicated to finding his unit and protecting their interior lines.

Mosby was very disciplined and he expected the same from those under his command. He understood that quality leadership springs from the spirit held within the breast of a commander. This perspective, coupled with a natural southern audacity and penchant for violence, created a charisma and a vision for his unit that significantly contributed to the success of the unit. One captured Union captain stated, “By his sprightly appearance and conversation he attracted considerable attention. He is slight, yet well formed; has a keen blue eye, and florid complexion; and displays no small amount of Southern bravado in his dress and manners. His gray plush hat is surmounted by a plume, which he tosses as he speaks in real Prussian style” (University of Virginia nd, 1).

Additionally, John Singleton Mosby was both intelligent and crafty, so much so that it was the latter skill that earned him the title “The Gray Ghost.” While visiting the Lake family house in 1864, he was spotted and shot in the stomach by a union soldier. Not wanting to be captured, he smeared blood on his mouth, feigned a “death rattle,” and pretended to be dying. The Union soldiers asked him his name and he stated “Lt. Johnson,” satiating their curiosity. They then absconded with his famous plumed hat, leaving him for dead. It was only much later that they realized that the true identity of the owner. When Union soldiers heard of his exploits after this incident, it appears they dubbed him the “Gray Ghost” (Coombs and Smith nd., 3).

Though listing all of the exploits of this famous unconventional commander is not within the purview of this paper, citing a few examples will bear some additional



perspective into the way this man thought, analyzed and acted. Perhaps the most famous raid occurred early in his command, on 9 March 1863, where his target was to snatch the local enemy commander. This raid targeted Union Colonel Wyndham, the local senior commander conducting counterguerilla operations. Wyndham had been successful in capturing twenty-four of Mosby's Rangers, earlier in February, and it is presumed that Mosby decided to conduct a raid ostensibly to render the enemy's counterguerilla efforts impotent. However, it is also not outside the realm of probability that such a counter-offensive also appealed to Mosby's Southern sense of honor, which advocated the daring and quick use of violence to preserve one's reputation and character (University of Virginia nd, 1).

The raid was to occur in the evening in Fairfax, Virginia. According to Colonel Mosby's sources, Colonel Sir Percy Wyndham was supposed to be at the courthouse. Mosby's forces picked their way through multiple enemy pickets to arrive at the target, linking up with their contact. Unfortunately, the intelligence was wrong, for Colonel Wyndham was in Washington for a social event. Mosby's contact then informed him, that though Wyndham was gone, there was a much bigger catch in the town, Brigadier General Edward Stoughton, Wyndham's commander. Quickly adjusting, Mosby formulated a new plan of attack on the new target. Using a common knock on the door, Mosby and his men forced his way past Stoughton's aide, into the General's residence and kidnapped the General. Simultaneously, Mosby's men were taking all the horses of the garrison in the town, severely reducing the enemy's mobility. They then worked their way back through the pickets, eluding pursuit (Coombs and Smith nd., 3). Colonel Mosby was a master of the fundamentals of UW. He understood the use of the locals to

support guerilla efforts with food, clothing, shelter, and medical treatment, as well as the need for external security measures in the form of a civilian early-warning network. He consistently applied the principles of flexibility and mobility by keeping his force light enough to quickly displace by horseback to relocate his camps in alternate locations. He kept his patrols small, usually not over twenty-five personnel, and normally operated during the night in order to further enhance his mobility and stealth (Coombs and Smith nd., 3). Moreover, after receiving permission from General Stuart, he began operations in the winter because he knew that armies do not usually maneuver during the colder months. He rarely established bases, opting most often to house the men within the local populace in between raids. The area of operations spanned a one-hundred-mile area from Richmond to Washington, DC, to the Blue Ridge and the Shenandoah, and all along the Potomac River. Overall, he proved himself to be adaptive, principled, opportunistic and aggressive, always staying one step ahead of the enemy.

Colonel Mosby's Rangers were highly successful during their twenty-eight-month campaign, disrupting the enemy's command and control and his resources, as well as his psyche. This success was the result of careful planning coupled with audaciousness and discipline, which was consistently demonstrated by Colonel Mosby. His unit simply followed his lead. Though his operations came at a fairly high cost, approximately 35 percent of his command became casualties of some sort, one hundred wounded, and four hundred seventy-seven captured, Mosby's Rangers were critical to the strategic fight (Lock 2000, 1). The proliferation of the threat Mosby's Rangers posed is evidenced by President Lincoln's humorous comment about General Stoughton's abduction versus the loss of the horses at the Fairfax County Courthouse, "Well, I'm sorry for that. I can make

new brigadier generals, but I can't make horses” (Mosby Foundation 2002, 1). Ironically, the very man against whom he waged his unconventional campaign gave him what could be his greatest praise for his performance and leadership. Ulysses S. Grant said of Mosby: “There were probably but few men in the South who could have commanded successfully in separate detachment in the rear of an opposing army and so near the border of hostilities as long as he did without losing his entire command” (Mosby Foundation 2002, 1).

#### William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan

On 1 January 1883 in Buffalo, New York, in an Irish borough where the unpaved streets, open sewers, and incessant bigotry toward the Irish was the norm, William J. Donovan was born to Tim and Anna Donovan. Despite the living conditions, his grandfather and father consistently demonstrated both humility and a strong work ethic that most assuredly set the example for young Donovan throughout his childhood. His grandfather worked multiple jobs on the port of Buffalo, from shoveling grain in the holds of ships to working in the rail yard. Donovan’s grandfather was driven by his faith, the Catholic Church, and an earnest desire to succeed. This was demonstrated tangibly to the family when he had earned enough money to buy the small brick home they had been renting, something quite uncommon amongst most of his peers. Moreover, Donovan’s grandfather took on the additional responsibility of various leadership positions within the local Catholic Church, as well as forming a local Catholic league (Brown 1982, 14-15). This dedication to God, family and the community had a very strong influence on Timothy Donovan his father.

It was out of a compassion, and perhaps anger as well, at the suffering of his people that grandfather Donovan was led to join the Fenians (aka Sinn Fein or We, Ourselves), a secret society organized to obtain Ireland's independence from England (Brown 1982, 16). Unfortunately, the character of this group amounted to little more than pretense for the social good; most often it was simply an excuse to become intoxicated while ranting. The underlying hypocrisy of Grandfather Donovan's choices contrasted with his staunch faith and morality would significantly influence lives of both his son Timothy Donovan and his grandson William.

Timothy Donovan, though an ordinary man, with a normal job as a greaser of locomotives, had the courage to depart from his father's political views. Whereas the Democratic Party was the accepted choice for the Irish, Tim chose to be a Republican. Presumably, this choice stemmed from his experiences with the Fenians, though he still enjoyed the political discourse at the local saloon every Saturday. This was the habit of most Irish men, to gather at the pub for food, drink, and debate. In a sense, Tim was simply living what had been modeled for him. Tim too, began including his son Will when he became a young man. It was here that Will learned of his cultural history, to debate, and about how men deal with one another (Dunlop 1982, 15). It was here that young Will learned to quickly grasp the essence of a topic of debate and both discern and proffer possible solutions. Often, the fellow men at the pub would put him on the spot, abruptly halting the debate and demand his thoughts. His father was always very proud of his son's ability to answer in a well thought out, measured manner, frequently clapping him on the back in approval (Dunlop 1982, 15). Tim, however, must have known and

seen value sets from the people in those saloons that he knew to be inconsistent with the moral teachings he wanted his children to learn.

Necessarily, Tim Donovan was also a strict authoritarian who was given to use severe discipline as the primary tool to inculcate mental, moral, physical and spiritual skills. Most assuredly this discipline stemmed from the influence of Grandfather Donovan. It was this attention to the detail of discipline that forged the character of William J. Donovan. Timothy Donovan continuously focused on the teaching of moral theology within his children. Additionally, he prescribed a vigorous regimen of reading and study, developing within all of his children an appreciation for the value of books. William J. Donovan was known to read such books as the *McGuffey's Reader*, which explored history while demonstrating the values of “integrity, honesty, industry, temperance, true patriotism, courage, politeness and all other moral and intellectual virtues” (Dunlop 1982, 17).

One only has to look at the incredible number of accomplishments of William J. Donovan (WJD), to realize that his father's training and counsel worked to a degree. WJD was focused on accomplishment, and accomplishment meant success for him. He lived the “American dream,” a poor son of an Irish immigrant, who through hard work, his faith, and opportunity became one of the most influential men in the world. However, like Rogers, Marion, and Mosby, that was only part of the story. As a soldier, officer and commander of several units, William J. Donovan displayed consistent and thorough judgment. During his first significant combat operation, he led a Cavalry unit from the New York Militia on the Mexican Expedition, chasing after Pancho Villa. Reportedly, General Pershing recognized the superior character and personal morality within the

thirty-three-year-old commander stating that Donovan was a product of the “*character militaris*” (Brown 1982, 36).

When he was a the battalion commander in the fighting 69th Infantry Regiment, during the winter of 1918, after hearing that two of his men were left in no-man’s land after an enemy contact he personally led a recovery mission. Though ultimately they did not find the soldiers, (the soldiers turned up six days later at another regiment’s sector), this demonstrated his willingness to do the right thing, his disregard for his own safety, and his sense of loyalty and service to his men.

Later, he commanded the 165th Regiment of the 42d Infantry Division, where his tenacious leadership, rapid assessment of the situation, and self-sacrifice carried the day. While wounded, he personally led an attack, as the Regimental Commander against a superior enemy. With total disregard for his own life, he would not allow the medics to carry him off the field despite his exploded knee, because he knew his men would hold if he too set the example. As he was wounded he continued to encourage his men through a bullhorn stating “They can’t get me, and they can’t get you!” The Prussians attempted to flank his position, but through his calm assessment he directed a mortar counterattack which ended up breaking the Prussian attack. His actions here earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The sheer number and significance of William J. Donovan’s achievements and contributions is extraordinary, but they came at a cost. Like his father, and like every man who has lived, WJD compartmentalized those parts of his life that temporarily ran counter to the prescriptions of his faith. Tim saw it within his father, and Will saw it within Tim. This presented for Will an irreconcilable issue that would plague him

throughout his life, for Will knew the prescriptions of his Catholic faith, from being schooled by nuns from the Nardin Academy, to his mother's pressure to involve him in the church as an altar boy, to his father's teachings. What he could not reconcile was seeing his very role models say one thing, but choose another. Over the course of his career, Will would make some poor choices which he would agonize over when compared to the standards he understood as right.

In 1914, as an established lawyer in Buffalo, William Donovan's life became a little more complicated. Throughout his young adult years, Donovan was ever known to assist and take interest in ladies when opportune, and especially if they were attractive (Dunlop 1982, 27). During that period, he also acted in local drama productions where he met a beautiful English-born actress by the name of Eleanor Robinson. This would seem somewhat innocuous, if Eleanor Robinson had not been married since 1910 to one of New York's most influential men, Mr. August Belmont (Metropolitan nd, 1). According to Donovan's brother Vincent, she was so immensely "impressed" with Donovan, that she invited him to come to New York to receive some personal "dramatic coaching," and Donovan obliged on a weekly basis (Brown 1982, 27). Consequently, there were many prominent Protestants from Buffalo who felt that Donovan was simply a philanderer (Dunlop 1982, 31).

Compounding the problem, Donovan had already met Ruth Rumsey in October of 1913, a beautiful debutante from an established Protestant family, who would become his wife in July 1914. Ruth made it clear to Donovan that his weekly "drama" lessons would stop, as evidenced when she told him that she was "not altogether pleased" about his arrangements with Mrs. Robeson Belmont (Brown 1982, 29). The competition of

interests, that is, his job, his apparent lust for women, his desire for his wife, and his faith created an environment which lent itself toward the same solution of compartmentalization that both his father and grandfather used. The cost though was the emotional well being of his family, and his own spiritual well-being. Donovan would later repeat the same mistakes, which would weigh on him heavily.

Donovan's solution was to choose to immerse himself in his work, as opposed to his wife. He deployed to both the Mexican Expedition and then World War II, initially separating himself from his wife from 1916 to 1919. Upon returning from the war, he promised Ruth a second honeymoon in the east to make up for lost time; however, during their honeymoon in Japan, the government offered Donovan the opportunity to be a military attaché to a small team going to Russia to collect intelligence on the growing opposition to Lenin and Trotsky (Brown 1982, 74). Donovan accepted the offer and Ruth returned to Buffalo, a pattern Donovan would continue for many years. During the 1930s he spent much of his time away from home in many other countries, on assignment to collect intelligence on the effects of modern war (Dunlop 1982, 184).

Every man must choose the line which delineates the amount of time and focus he spends on the various parts of his life: God, family, duty. Donovan focused on his duty first, much to the detriment of his family as evidenced by Ruth's several health problems, depression, and her choices of occasional male travel companions (Brown 1982, 37, 92-93, 141). Sadly, though Ruth and Donovan appeared to be the loving affluent couple, and reportedly loved and esteemed one another, they inevitably led very separate lives. This condition arose from their choices, and the consequence was isolation for both, each



choosing to address the problem through work, social activities, or indulgence (Brown 1982, 299).

In 1939, Donovan chose again to indulge his promiscuous side, revealing a well-hidden weakness that was destroying him from the inside out.

The Donovans' world was coming to an end, for a number of reasons. If war came - and there was more than a hint of the ball before the Battle of Waterloo about Patricia's [Ruth and Will's daughter] twenty-first birthday - Donovan would be recalled for some task or another. The war itself was bound to change their world once again. On one personal, human level it had already changed irrevocably. Donovan had had a brief fling with a well known society woman - she was at the party - and he had fallen from grace. He had now wandered around, a tortured man, for months, seeking the advice of his partners and the solace of confessional. And although he had in effect received the pardon of faith, he could not forgive himself. (Brown 1982, 132)

Unfortunately, Donovan would continue down this road of compartmentalizing the inconsistencies of his life, reportedly choosing the comfort and companionship of many OSS women during his frequent global travels (Dunlop 1982, 361). Regrettably, this same issue of integrity failure is prevalent today throughout American and Army culture, and perhaps more so in SF.

William J. Donovan is remembered by most as a man of strong personal discipline and a preoccupation with honor and with manly, soldierly, and honest conduct. Major General Donovan said, "I'm not much of a religious man but I frequently fall on my knees and ask my God to give me humility" (Brown 1982, 15). He is remembered for former qualities, but, as evidenced by his very comment, he probably grieved at the occasional hypocrisy in his conduct. Yet, despite all the failure in his personal life, he was known for his initiative, physical hardness, his sense of self-sacrifice, keen intellect, and quick and accurate judgment. These were also the same qualities that he was looking for in his recruits for the SOE and the OSS.

In the summer of 1940, Donovan was to befriend a British agent, William Stephenson, otherwise known as Intrepid, in order to facilitate the building of the Office of Coordinator of Intelligence (Brown 1982, 148). Stephenson and Donovan would work closely together over the course of the Second World War in order to build up the American intelligence capability and coordinate their nations' efforts against a common enemy.

### Special Operations Executive: A Model to be Followed

All potential SOE personnel were subjected to a series of interviews designed to gauge two things: motive and character. Interviewers would find out from the candidate whether they held normal views about the Nazi regime or whether their views were potentially extreme or abnormal. Once ascertained, the interviewers would turn to the individual's character, searching specifically for courage and prudence. The SOE was also looking for personnel who could think two to three steps ahead, analyzing indicators and reflectively thinking about potential courses of action. They would dig just as diligently to determine if the individual showed signs of the worst trait a candidate could have – impulsiveness. Personnel in this sort of business must be able to resist the urge to make rapid decisions or actions (Foot 1984, 58-59). Interestingly, several of the SOE's personnel came from what many consider the criminal class. These people had already developed skills that would often prove useful to an agent, skills such as forgery, negotiation, and the ability to bluff. If the person showed potential, then he was sent for training, a course that most often lasted little more than ten months. This is significant because, as has been previously identified by the current SOF truths, SOF can not be

mass produced, and competent SOF can not be created after an emergency occurs, yet that was exactly what the SOE was attempting to do.

The SOE training plan consisted of a series of three-to-four-week courses at various locations throughout the British Isles, which focused on physical training, combatives, explosives, small arms, and small unit tactics. Candidates were observed as they were being trained and when they were off. At many of the country houses where SOE training took place, there would be open bars for the candidates to enjoy after the days training. This often gave instructor personnel an opportunity to observe firsthand the true character of many a candidate in a different environment. Personnel could be dropped from the course if they showed themselves to be unpromising anywhere through the course of training. Though Foot does not elaborate on what constituted “unpromising,” it has been the experience of this author that mistakes serious enough to warrant casting doubt on a student’s potential most often involve an undesirable character trait or perhaps a physical condition. Still, the training focused on tasks, not on training or improving character.

#### The Office of Strategic Services

Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, authors of the book *Subrosa*, document the initial recruiting techniques used by the OSS. They state, with reference to Bill Donovan, “From the beginning, the British gave him full cooperation. They told him how they trained their men, what weapons they had, and how they communicated with the resistance” (1946, 16). Like the SOE, Donovan selected people he knew and trusted, because there was no formalized selection process yet. Often when Donovan was asked “Who was in the OSS?” he would respond with “Wall Street Bankers!” (1946, 22).

Actually, many did come from predominantly wealthy or upper class backgrounds. Their ranks included Raymond Guest, a cousin of Churchill; James Baxter III, President of Williams College; T. Ryan, a millionaire's son; Tommy Bridges, Detroit Tiger pitcher; Prince Serge Obolensky, general in the Russian Army under the Tsar; Paul Mellon, son of another millionaire, and many other people from academia (Alsop 1946, 22). It is not hard to see how some critics of the organization bestowed its dubious title of "Oh So Social." Despite the occasional slight, Donovan was the spirit of this organization, with his energy, wit, and tenaciousness; he influenced his organization by his outward example of service, opportunism and excellence. From 1941 to 1943, Donovan never took any payment for his service to the country. Donovan is reported to have said to prospective volunteers "Write me a memorandum saying how you could be of service to this organization, and if I agree with you, you're hired" (1946, 22). Service was a concept that was clearly sought after in this organization as well as in the SOE, and Donovan never failed to set the example in this category.

Despite the apparent proliferation of wealthy individuals dispersed throughout the rank and file of the OSS, many of those people risked much and some never came home. Most performed admirably, but given the necessity of quickly establishing the organization, the right man was not always chosen (Alsop 1946, 34). According to Alsop, the qualities sought in an agent were a "passion for not thinking himself an agent," loyalty, and courage (Alsop 1946, 35-36). Put another way, the effective agent had an ability to not think too highly of his position; he had some humility.

The OSS staff clearly understood the value of selecting personnel with the right attributes for the diverse set of operations with which their organization was tasked. Their

stated goal for their assessment process was to “reveal the personalities of OSS recruits to the extent of providing ground for sufficiently reliable predictions of their usefulness to the organization during the remaining years of the war” (OSS 1947, 8). For the staff, the most important item was “the amount of harm prevented,” that a poorly selected candidate could cause. In their estimation, it consists of the friction, the impairment of the efficiency and morale, and the injury to the reputation of an organization, that result from an agent who is stupid, apathetic, sullen, resentful, arrogant or insulting in his dealings with members of his own unit or of allied units, or with customers or citizens of foreign countries (OSS 1947, 9). The OSS was looking for a man, and sometimes a woman, who was physically fit, intelligent, able to learn and speak other languages, but, more importantly, they were looking for the man who was able to exert influence and leadership while working through others. The OSS developed a three-day event composed of numerous psychological evaluations, written and in the form of leadership exercises, all of which were administered by psychologists and psychiatrists (OSS 1947, iv). Overall, the course of events was designed to determine if the individual could influence others to accomplish the mission, but for them to accomplish it as if it was their idea, thereby empowering the group. Put another way, they were looking for the person who would work “by, with, and through” other personnel.

This challenge of determining the appropriate character traits for SOF in general is not a new one. The whole process of translating operational requirements into enabling character traits that increase effectiveness is difficult work, yet over the years the snapshot tends to be rather similar. The OSS developed eight common qualifications of personality which they felt were critical to mission accomplishment:

- a. Motivation for Assignment: war morale, interest in proposed assignment.
- b. Energy and Initiative: activity level, zest, effort, initiative.
- c. Effective Intelligence: ability to select strategic goals and the most efficient means of attaining them; speed and accuracy of judgment; resourceful in solving problems; originality; good judgment in dealing with things, people or ideas.
- d. Emotional Stability: ability to govern self in disturbing emotions; maturity, steadiness and endurance under pressure; snafu tolerance, and freedom from neurotic tendencies.
- e. Social Relations: ability to get along with others; social awareness; good will; teamwork; tact; freedom from disturbing prejudices; freedom from annoying traits.
- f. Leadership: social initiative; organizing ability; ability to evoke cooperation; acceptance of responsibility.
- g. Security: ability to keep secrets; caution; discretion; ability to bluff and to mislead.
- h. Physical Ability: agility, daring ruggedness, stamina. (OSS 1947, 30-31)

The problem is that when a man is selected, based on the intellectual, physical, and moral traits displayed during a finite selection, there is no guarantee that he will not err or show a lack of judgment in the future, nor is there any assurance that the selectee was not simply putting on a front in order to pass and get to the unit. The only assurance is that an individual met the standard for now, rather, like the OSS, one knows that he displayed some agreeable personality traits. Personalities are like attitudes and are based largely on emotional perceptions, and therefore, they change often at inopportune moments causing the very “harm” the OSS wished to avoid.

#### Aaron Banks: The Father of Special Forces

The same held true when Aaron Banks, one of Donovan’s protégés, was forming the 10th Special Forces Group. The unit was formally activated on 19 June 1952 (Banks 1986, 171). Banks had convinced the Department of the Army to adopt the formation of an SF unit oriented on UW, but the cost was at the expense of the Rangers who were

disbanded (1986, 158). Banks later wrote a recruiting pamphlet that outlined the personnel who would be considered for the SF, “[volunteers would be] a minimum age of twenty-one; rank of sergeant or above; airborne trained or volunteer for jump training; language capability (European) and/or travel experience in Europe; an excellent personnel record; et cetera” (Banks 1986, 168). The pamphlet was oriented toward the Rangers and former OSS soldiers who had recently been disbanded. Additionally, Banks had been under significant pressure to get the unit formed quickly, which was evidenced by a lack of a formal selection process other than the prerequisites laid out in the pamphlet. The result was that once the initial recruits arrived from the various units throughout the Army, true assessment of their potential only occurred through direct observation during training. Unfortunately, that was too late in many circumstances, and Banks faced the same thing that Donovan did.

As a result, the Department of the Army directed a survey be done in order to address “the problem of choosing the right men for Special Forces” (Abelson et al. 1954, v). The study focused on determining a man’s suitability and “usefulness” for SF by examining his past accomplishments in conjunction with his performance during training and the judgments of others. They were hoping to determine indicators of “effectiveness,” enabling them to group the participants of the study into two groups “very effective,” and “less effective” (Abelson et al. 1954, v).

Multiple interviews with members of the 10th SFG (A) and others who had real guerilla warfare experience in order to discern factors that were critical to operating in the UW environment. As a result, the authors of the study determined that five factors were

critical to the success of SF soldiers and should be used when screening potential applicants:

- (1) Technical competence and skill
- (2) Dependability – staying on the job no matter how difficult or threatening the situation.
- (3) Initiative – taking advantage of changing situations without orders or supervision
- (4) Patience – enduring periods of forced inactivity without becoming restless or careless
- (5) Representativeness – looking and acting in a way approved by other SF personnel. (Abelson et al. 1954, 8)

These criteria were then published as a series of written questions designed to evaluate other SF personnel; the format used and phraseology bore marked similarity to the same peer assessment report of 2003 to 2004 used in the current SFQC. These questions were administered to 378 officers and NCOs of the 10th SFG(A) in order to screen them into the “very effective” or “least effective” groups. In the end, 280 men fell into the more qualified group and 127 were found less qualified. The remainder was considered “middle of the road” and was discarded (Abelson et al. 1954, 11). The two groups were then given a battery of tests that measured their authoritarianism, anxiety, and personality.

The results indicated that the more effective SF soldier was far from what Hollywood expected for the world of espionage, guerillas, and intrigue. The ideal SF soldier was shown to be mature and willing to accept responsibility, with indications from childhood of an ability to be self-sufficient. Additionally, the more effective soldiers tended to be anti-authoritarian, not placing primacy on obedience or respect. In terms of vocational likes, the more effective group preferred jobs which involved initiative, physical activity, and new experiences. This explains why the majority of the “more



effective” group had played varsity football or some other type of sport. With reference to anxiety, it was not really a distinguishing factor as both groups had low evidence of chronic fear, which can probably be attributed to the fact that they volunteered for the duty and were aware of the risks (Abelson et al. 1954, 26, 30-33).

Colonel Bank’s best soldiers for the unconventional job were deemed to be calm, courageous, self-starters, who had the maturity and the heart to continue the fight and accomplish whatever task was set before them, regardless of the conditions. The author, having just commanded in the SFQC, can verify that though the selection system has been modified, one can see the influence even today of this survey’s results. Peer reports, personality profiles, psychological tests, and situational reaction exercises are all part of the selection and training now in the SFQC.

### The Cultural Foundation of US Soldiers

The logic is clear that given the limited time and the increased demand for these types of soldiers, it would be imprudent to focus on anything but hard, tactical training after selection. The issue is that the current operational environment demands more from the soldiers; it demands that they be brighter, more knowledgeable, and most importantly, have more situation awareness. It is this awareness that enables a person to understand the options available to him in a situation, as well as the consequences of the potential decisions. The individual is trusted to make a choice between those options. He is trusted to judge which option will best accomplish the mission without compromising the very ethics or character values that enable his organization to function and the very code that protects him. There is a serious problem though; the majority of these soldiers do not have the same cultural understanding of once commonly held values.

Most of these soldiers were born primarily as Generation “Y,” or having been born from approximately 1977 to 2002. Some were born into the previous generation known as generation “X,” between the years of 1965 through 1976 (Neuborne and Kerwin 1999). There is a substantial blurring of both generations amongst multiple sources as to the exact birth years, but the qualities of character between the two are strikingly similar.

Generation Y persons are focused on self-fulfillment, improvement, and often challenge authority. They are characterized as having been pampered, coddled, and inundated with activities centered on entertaining them from the time they were toddling (Armour 2005). In a word they are generally independent, but are often given to quitting, and lacking of commitment if they sense they are not being respected. Additionally, the group as a whole does not respond well to traditional hierarchical supervision or authority, frequently demonstrating an unabashed tendency to question authority, a practice entrenched from childhood. They are also very aware of their own sense of worth, which is all too often inflated (Sustainable Business Network 2003).

Generation X persons are similar, but more manageable, because they do have a need to be recognized. These people are often characterized as an overeducated, underachieving, somewhat isolationistic group who hold a significantly cynical worldview, which stemmed from the practices of their “baby-booming” parents who were focused on material achievement at all costs. This group grew up on television watching reruns of the Brady Bunch, Happy Days, and Leave it to Beaver, comparing their current family situation with what they had seen on the television. Despite the cynicism, this

group wants to contribute to the solution, wants to be recognized for their efforts, and wants a fair balance between work and family (Sustainable Business Network 2003).

The common understanding of right and wrong behavior is not common anymore, and therefore the assumption can not be made that a person knows what the organizational values are or much less why they are held. Generation Y personnel view their jobs as a means to more self-fulfillment, and once that level of fulfillment is challenged by the hardships of work, these people are given to move on and find a more accommodating job. The irony is that, despite this apparent lack of commitment, they are very adamant about wanting responsibility and meaning in their work immediately (Sustainable Business Network 2003). Overall many of their values directly conflict with majority of the organizational values of SF and the Army as a whole. True, soldiers are issued cards and dog tags displaying the acronym LDRSHP (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, personal courage), but the possession of these does not indicate an understanding of those values.

If one assumes that the process by which any person makes a decision includes some sort of comparative mental process where the individual assesses the value of a number of options, the individual must have something to which to compare the potential value. He must have a set of experiences that have developed his personal set of values and character. The question is whether commanders are ready to allow subordinates to make key tactical and operational decisions with the character traits they grew up with, or whether organizational traits should be inculcated, learned, and trained to better ensure success.

### Current Reflections on the Status of SF

As was mentioned in chapter 3, a survey was conducted of eighty three SOF personnel who had deployed with SF soldiers, both older and younger, in the past several years. The purpose of this survey was to determine whether the character of SF graduates has had an overall positive or negative impact on the ability to accomplish the mission on today's global battlefield. The benefit of this survey to the Army, and SF in particular, will hopefully improve its ability to assess, predict, and act more rapidly on the contemporary nonlinear battlefield. The premise is that if the mental and moral foundation required in SF soldiers can be better defined and trained, then this will enable them to make more accurate judgments in the field.

The survey was fielded amongst a varied population. Respondents of multiple ranks, services and backgrounds were included, ranging from multiple noncommissioned officers, to sergeants-major, personnel from government service, several retired officers, one general officer, and several officers ranging in rank from captain to colonel.

Overall, as might be expected, special operators fared rather well on a survey about the character and honor of their own, but there are some significant assumptions that can be drawn from the data. Across the board, with reference to most of the questions, the majority of respondents, approximately 70 percent, found SF personnel, young and old alike, to be predominantly honorable, courageous, and professional, having admirable character and integrity. That said, on the surface it would indicate there is no problem, or if there is one it is minimal. However, even within the best ratings, the survey population indicated some disturbing trends.

The first fact which the reader should be aware is that 60 percent of the respondents were in a supervisory capacity with respect to the individuals referenced in the survey. This gave the majority of the respondents a recent hard look at these personnel at the grass roots level. It also shows that they had the daily, intimate interaction in combination with a commensurate level of operational experience to make some valuable observations.

The first evaluative question in the survey requires the respondent to rate the individual from one to seven with reference to the Army Values, one being best and seven being worst. As might be expected, the majority of individuals received high ratings; in fact, 76 percent or better rated the best in loyalty, duty, honor and personal courage. Interestingly though, of those that rated the best, only 48 percent rated best in respect, with integrity and selfless service falling in at 68 and 69 percent respectively. This begs the question: “How did the remainder fare?” On average, 20 percent of the respondents, people from the SOF community, rated SF soldiers average or below in the areas of loyalty, duty, honor, and personal courage. The overall community felt that approximately 31 percent of the individuals rated, were average or below with reference to integrity and selfless service as well. Respect was the worst category, with over half (52 percent) of the respondents indicating the SF community had issues with regard to this quality.

The second question rated the individuals in the same manner with reference to the SF core values. The majority of the respondents, 74 percent or higher, indicated that those rated fell into the “best” category (those that scored either a one or two in any given attribute) with respect to warrior ethos, professionalism, initiative, and versatility.

However, approximately 62 percent of the respondents felt that the weakest characteristics for those in the “best” category were cohesion, character, and cultural awareness. Coincidentally, with respect to those who were rated average and below, 37 percent of the respondents felt that cohesion was lacking; 35 percent felt character was weak; and 42 percent felt that cultural awareness was weak as well.

The last three questions of the survey were designed to elicit opinions and anecdotal evidence concerning indicators of the presence, or lack thereof, of character. Question eight concerned the amount of time, effort, attention, or allowances that were made for new SF graduates as opposed to when older graduates assimilated onto a team. Question nine intended to draw from the respondent specific incidents of UCMJ action, and to which group they were generally ascribed. The last question concerned adaptability and whether newer graduates of the SFQC demonstrated an increased level of critical and adaptive thinking than those of older generations.

Overall, most respondents felt that the newer graduates were fine and required little extra attention, were relatively equal in terms of UCMJ, and showed some promise as it relates to adaptive thinking and situational awareness. In general terms, 43 percent of the participants felt that newer SFQC graduates needed additional attention with respect to assimilation. With reference to UCMJ, 25 percent of the respondents observed a higher incidence of UCMJ offenses than with the older group. Lastly, in terms of adaptive thinking and situational awareness, 63 percent of those who participated showed that they thought that younger SFQC graduates did not have the capability at this point to adaptively think, but that for the most part, it was something that could be solved experientially.

One retired lieutenant colonel put it this way, “I think in general, with the advent of increased emphasis on MTV, video games, individual achievement/wealth coupled with the lack of two-parent homes, the soldier has to ‘learn’ character, instead of being ‘born into it’ Blackwater, etc. did not exist in the 70s, 80s, 90s . . . thus the temptation was not the same in that era. The younger soldier, SF or otherwise, see’s the lack of commitment (marriage) from their homes, their neighbors, friends, senior SF soldiers retiring/getting out for [exorbitant money], hard for them to maintain team unity and character.”

Overall, roughly 75 percent of SF soldiers are doing the right thing. The bottom line, though, is that after all the time, effort, and research put into selection of the best people, the SF community itself indicates that 20 to 30 percent of the recruits are missing the mark specifically in the areas of selfless service, respect, character, cohesion and cultural awareness. The fear that most have is that those 20 or 30 percent will be the ones who will be in front of Fox or CNN or ABC, with the potential to severely damage, if not destroy the credibility of the United States, and on a smaller scale, SOF in general.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has proposed to determine whether character should be trained in the SFQC through the study of the value sets within multiple warrior castes, as well as the study of key leaders in the history of SF and UW. The premise is that if those value sets can be identified, then their impact can be assessed as it relates to the effectiveness of that warrior. Throughout this study, there have been multiple references to the admirable qualities and values that most warrior castes held. Overall, there is quite a bit of commonality amongst the various sects and they all rest upon the concept of sacrifice of the self for betterment of the whole. Commanders fail when that concept is disregarded. The other trend that was there, is that, to a man, there was usually some flaw or consistent compromise within the very hero's character, an "Achilles' heel," that the man kept compartmentalized. Whether or not that flaw was the marginalizing or catalyzing is debatable.

Can and should SF soldiers be trained with respect to these qualities of character, or must training be limited to the mastery of selected combat-oriented tasks? As revealed by the historical analysis, personnel are selected for character, hoping at least to eliminate the "bad," or those who appear to have either character or personality flaws. The issue is that there is not a man alive who is not flawed in some way or form. So where does this leave the historically proven process of selection for character? Realistically, the process of selection simply demonstrates that a man performed to the standard for the duration of the course, and his past performance is assumed to be reasonably representative of future performance. This is a large assumption to make, because often it is not true. The latter



fact is supported by the results of the survey, which shows that on average 20 to 25 percent of SFQC graduates have significant issues with character.

Many readers at this point may be considering the successful histories of men like Rogers, Marion, Mosby, and Donovan, who succeeded despite their weaknesses. The facts beg the basic question, “Does character really matter?” Is it not possible to accomplish the mission, win wars, in a generally “moral” fashion, and yet be a generally self-serving individual? Obviously, the answer to the latter is yes, this paradoxical existence is not only possible, but probable. Rogers did perform great exploits with his Rangers, but he also displayed wavering judgment on frequent occasions as evidenced by not just his own side’s distrust, but Washington’s as well. Marion, though highly successful up and down the Pee Dee River in South Carolina, was still given to impetuosity. Mosby, brilliant at irregular warfare, was highly concerned about his appearance, and had a tremendous penchant for honorable violence in his eyes, but perhaps hasty and impractical by others. It is probable because every man has a flaw or issue that must be addressed. Donovan, America’s hero, one of the few that earned the Medal of Honor while still alive, was a workaholic who found his pleasure in other women, destroying his marriage and his home. His choice would plague him for the rest of his life, and most probably affected his decision-making ability.

Most men simply tuck their flaws away into a place in their psyche where it remains untouched until the right triggers come along. Problems arise when those triggers come along, enticing the individual to choose his own agenda over his duty. Without inculcating an organization’s values, or character, enabling a soldier to use it as a base from which to judge right and wrong, a soldier will simply adopt the relativistic approach he

grew up with, usually choosing the path of least resistance, which most often means choosing himself at the expense of duty. That is why character matters. It is a guide that creates moral boundaries that support performance, mission accomplishment, the retention of a warrior's honor, and ultimately the reintegration of the warrior back into society. It is not a guarantee, but it makes good decisions more likely. United States Naval Academy professor and author, Shannon French, echoes the same sentiment: "The purpose of a code is to restrain warriors, for their own good as much as for the good of others" (French 2003, 231).

The consequence of not training character is not limited to diminished judgment and adaptive ability; it also impacts the soldier himself and potentially his family for years. When a man intentionally violates a code or institutional ethos while in the context of doing his duty, he destroys the very bedrock of his self-respect (French 2004, 6). In fact, it is this self-respect that enables him to retake his position in society. Often though, it is the morally ambiguous position on the ground on which the nation has placed him, that induces him to choose poorly. Compounding this issue is the fact that as an institution, the Army has not trained him to deal with such ambiguity. The consequence very often is not just the mission, but also his later inability to adjust to life at home due to post-traumatic stress disorder (2004, 4). The post-traumatic stress disorder then often spurs other addictive behaviors, increasing the inability to regain normalcy among the very citizens he volunteered to protect. In many ways it is a travesty and a huge disservice to this nation's soldiers.

There is definitely a character problem. In 2005, there were two SF soldiers, one a noncommissioned officer and the other a warrant officer, who were arrested for the

illegal sale of 32,000 rounds of ammunition to the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (Smyth 2005). They used their position to further their own agenda. There are scores of other stories, some substantiated, some not, that point to the same lack of judgment.

On a grander scale, if war is simply an extension of politics, a means by which to force one's will upon an opponent, then war by its very nature is a selfish business. Does not the perspective of the person really determine who the terrorist is and who is the freedom fighter? What separates the SF soldier, from that of the terrorist, since they use the same tactics? The answer is character, which at its core is the concept of selflessness.

Character matters because it affects the means by which the ends of war are achieved, and that is directly executed by soldiers. Character in American culture starts with the value that life is inherently a good thing and ought to be preserved. That is probably the most fundamental difference between the soldier and the terrorist. Life is not held so dearly with the US' current adversary. Many argue that the terrorist holds equivalently strong values, that the Al-Qaeda suicide bomber is exhibiting the same style of self-sacrifice. True their acts of bombing demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice his life for their cause, regardless of the cost in human life, non-combatant or otherwise. Therein lays the difference. The radical Islamic suicide-bomber draws no distinction between soldier and citizen, men or women, children or babies. All are legitimate targets for the terrorist. It is in this sense that they hold life in general cheaply.

All too often people believe that since two groups use the same tactics they are inherently equivalent. Such logic is flawed because the tools have no reason or judgment, only the man behind the tool has that, and hence the need for character. Like it or not, it is a cold, hard fact that war is used by this nation to force its will on a group or another

nation, and unfortunately, most men will not adopt the will of another without loss and pain. The executors of that force are soldiers. Specifically, SF soldiers are often there at points in the battlefield where they will face a moral dilemma of some sort, of the type where they will have to choose who lives and who dies, while simultaneously assessing the operational, and potentially strategic, second- and third-order effects of the choices. That SF soldier will probably be a twenty-to-twenty-six-year-old staff sergeant, who, along with his buddy, is operating with his counterpart Iraqi, Afghani, Phillipino, or Colombian unit. If all he has to fall back on is the code of non-absolutism and post-modern relativism that this society embraces, defined as the culture of self and the tolerance of all save those that are exclusionary, then he will most probably make a wrong choice because his decision will be based solely on his perception of the circumstances and his twenty-six years of life experience.

At the core of character is the virtue of heart. Heart is the ability of an individual to hold something more dearly than his own wants. It is the compassion one has for other people and their plights. It is a willingness to sacrifice all that one has for the good of others because life is important, so much so, that some must die so that the many can live. Why a person would do this is always the question. The answer is love. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13 NIV).

### Recommendations

Character must be trained because, regardless of background, the Army, and this nation, can ill afford placing ill-prepared soldiers for the morally ambiguous situations that they will face, and many already have faced. For years now, the training of character, if it occurred, benefited only the officer. The programs in place now, the situational

readiness exercises in SFAS and the Volkmann Exercise in Phase III of the Officer's Course, benefit only leaders. The problem is that on today's battlefield, all of the detachment members are leaders who can potentially find themselves in situations that are morally ambiguous, whose outcome could have severe impact.

SFAS has for some time conducted the Situational Reaction Exercises. These exercises were originally designed simply to evaluate an officer candidate in an environment where his beliefs were pitted against a scenario that forces him to find a way to do the "right" thing in accordance with the Army values and the SF core values, yet remain effective accomplishing the mission without compromise. These types of exercises are just one venue that could be applied throughout the SFQC to all ranks. The purpose would be to develop, mentor, and coach modeled behaviors and choices in order to produce an SF graduate who is ready to face the moral challenges of today's battlefields. This type of training could also be incorporated into field training exercises, and ultimately could be worked into a recurring cycle throughout all phases of the course with the aim of inculcating SF organizational values. These measures coupled with programmed instruction on a regular basis, honest mandatory self-evaluation, and regular mentorship are the keys to preparing soldiers to face the morally ambiguous situations that they are bound to experience.

## APPENDIX A

### CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF RECENT SFQC GRADUATES

#### Character Assessment of Recent SFQC Graduates [Exit this survey >>](#)

##### 1. Introduction

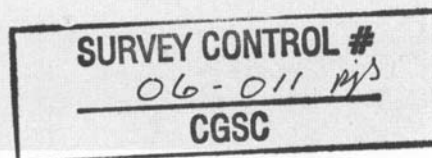
Colleagues,  
Thank you for taking the time and consideration to submit your thoughts on this survey. The purpose of this survey is to determine whether the character of Special Forces graduates has had an overall positive or negative impact on the ability to accomplish the mission on today's global battlefield. The benefit of this survey to the Army, and Special Forces in particular, will be to improve our ability to assess, predict, and act more rapidly on the contemporary non-linear battlefield, because we can better define and train the mental and moral foundation required in our Special Forces Soldiers, enabling them to make more accurate judgments. This survey is voluntary, takes approximately 10 minutes, and the respondent may quit at any time.

All data collected will be maintained by the U.S. Army. Please do not divulge your name, your unit, or the names of any individuals described in your answers.

If you have questions about the survey (CGSC control #06-11) please contact MAJ Jon Blake at jonathan.blake@us.army.mil.

Thank you for your support.

Very Respectfully,  
Jon Blake  
MAJ, SF  
CGSC Student



[Next >>](#)

#### Character Assessment of Recent SFQC Graduates [Exit this survey >>](#)

1. Have you deployed to combat or training with both recent and older graduates from the Special Forces Qualification Course(SFQC)(If no, there is no need to continue)? (2000 and after = recent.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

**2. What is your rank now?**

☐ SGT

☐ SSG

☐ SFC

☐ MSG/1SG

☐ SGM

☐ CPT

☐ MAJ

☐ LTC

☐ COL

☐ General Officer

☐ Other (please specify)

**3. What was your rank when you deployed with that/those member/s of Special Forces?**

☐ PV1-PFC

☐ SPC/CPL

☐ SGT

☐ SSG

☐ SFC

- ☐ 2LT
- ☐ 1LT
- ☐ CPT
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What was your professional relationship to that/those graduate/s from the SFQC during the deployment?**

- ☐ Supervisor
- ☐ Co-worker (knew of the person, but in a different element)
- ☐ Team Member (was in the same section or team, but was neither Supervisor/Subordinate)
- ☐ Subordinate

**5. With reference to that group of graduates from the SFQC, please rate them from 1-7, (1 being the best) in the Army Values.**

A "4" rating would be the average soldier who was usually dependable, understood the basic mechanics of his job but occasionally needs direction; considered other's needs/interests equal with his own; would not wittingly demonstrate disrespect; would demonstrate verbally that honor and integrity are important, but could potentially violate through occasional poor judgment.

1 Best      2      3      4      5      6      7 Worst

Loyalty    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐

Duty        ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐



Respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selfless Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Courage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Again, please rate these graduates of the SFQC that you have deployed with, 1-7 (1 being the best and 7 the worst) with respect to the SF Core Values.**

**Again the baseline, or "4" rating, is the average soldier who sometimes thinks of others/the unit first; is proficient in the basic skills of his job, usually requires direction; occasionally overly focused on the specific task, missing the overall picture; gets along with others satisfactorily, and has a basic understanding that the study of culture merits some attention.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Best						Worst

Warrior Ethos (the sum of those qualities required to close with and destroy the enemy)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professionalism (takes pride in performance of	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

unit)

Initiative (acts  
with minimal  
guidance, creative)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Versatility  
(assesses rapidly  
and adapts  
quickly)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Cohesion (gets  
along well with  
others)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Character (you can  
trust him to do the  
right thing)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Cultural Awareness  
(Thinks of his  
couterpart first)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**7. How do you perceive the character of younger SF soldiers, as compared to older SF soldiers?**

☐ Significantly Weaker (or worse)

☐ Somewhat Weaker

☐ About the same

☐ Somewhat Stronger

☐ Significantly Stronger (or better)

☐ N/A

[<< Prev](#)   [Next >>](#)

**Character Assessment of Recent SFQC Graduates** [Exit this survey >>](#)

**3. Character Assessment of Recent SFQC Graduates**

8. In comparison to older team members, did the younger SF soldiers require additional or different attention in order to effectively integrate into the team? If so, can you describe the attention required and why?

A rectangular text input area with a vertical scrollbar on the right side, intended for the respondent to describe the attention required for younger SF soldiers to integrate into the team.

9. Comparing older team members to younger team members, did you see a greater incidence of UCMJ offenses in either of the two groups? If so, what was the nature of those offenses and to which group did they belong?

A rectangular text input area with a vertical scrollbar on the right side, intended for the respondent to describe the nature of UCMJ offenses and to which group they belonged.

10. In comparison with older team members, did you find that these soldiers could rapidly assess a situation, adapting as necessary to

accomplish the mission? If yes, please elaborate on a specific behavior that displayed adaptive ability?



<< Prev      Done >>

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